

Buddhist mountain-shrine above Temple of Chieh-T'ai-ssu,
Western Hills, Peking.

CHINA TO CHELSEA

*A MODERN PILGRIMAGE
ALONG ANCIENT HIGHWAYS*
BY CAPTAIN DUNCAN McCALLUM
M.C.



*Illustrations from the Author's photographs,
& Maps
by D. L. Browne*

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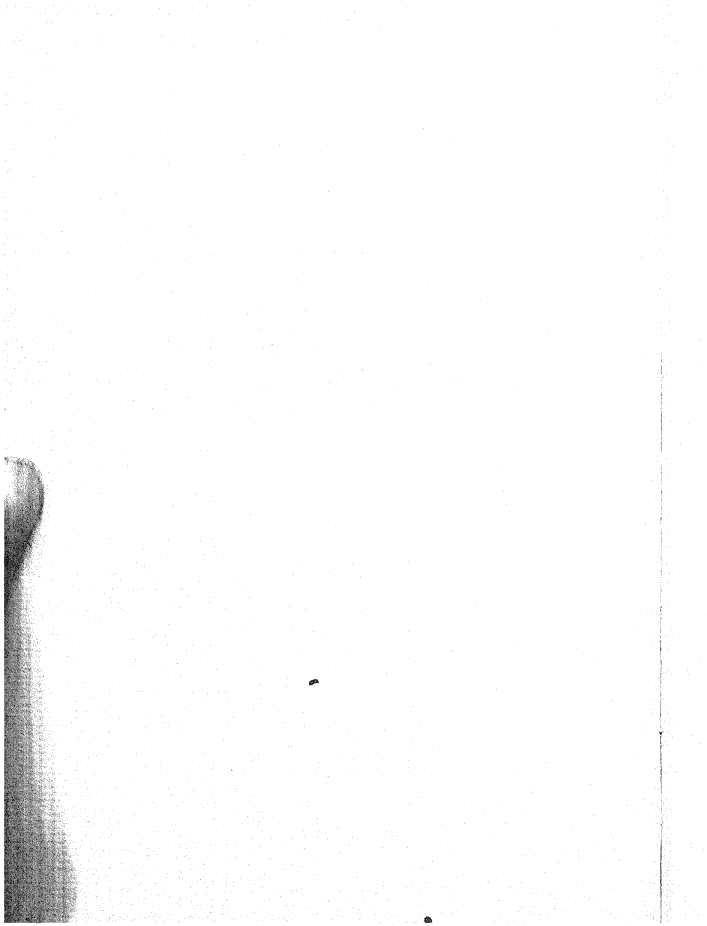
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TO
MY WIFE
MY INDEFATIGABLE AND COURAGEOUS
COMPANION ON THESE
JOURNEYS



PREFACE

It is doubtful if this book would ever have seen the light of day had it not been for the collaboration and help of my friend, Mr. J. Drummond C. Monfries. I am indebted to his expert literary knowledge and skill for the setting out of this record of our pilgrimage. The historical notes, which give so much added interest to the chapters on Indo-China particularly, are entirely due to his untiring research work. I would like to take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude and appreciation of his invaluable assistance.

This book has been written mainly for the benefit of travel-lovers, and travellers who may be following in our tracks. The contents are by no means intended as a treatise on any country or countries traversed during our journey. But, whereas of the majority of these countries much is already known or has been written, I found that very few books were available in the English language dealing with Indo-China. Consequently, the origin of the various States that go to make up that country has been particularly stressed in the following chapters. To those for whom the history of ancient races has no particular interest I would suggest that they omit this section and read on to the more personal account of our wanderings. Judging, however, from my own experience when searching for information in order to organise our passage through Indo-China, I feel convinced that others who may have the opportunity of visiting that delightful corner of the Far East will be grateful for even the little knowledge that this book is able to offer.

Brief accounts of certain incidents of our wanderings have already appeared in the *Times* and the *Wide World Magazine*. A lecture was also delivered before the Central Asian Society during the autumn of 1928 on my 'Impressions of Indo-China'. In this latter connection my acknowledgments are due for permission to use the maps prepared for that lecture. In the present volume, not only has the actual journey been dealt with, but a chapter or two devoted to what was perhaps of almost as great interest—the preliminary preparations and organisation of the expedition.

No account of this journey would be complete without an acknowledgment of my indebtedness to Mr. N. G. Lovell and Mr. F. Rumsey-Williams, my companions and able supporters, not only during the trials and tribulations of the journey itself, but during that period of preparation in connexion with the proposed journey across Central Asia which we were not allowed to make. The success of the expedition, as made, was in a very large part due to the loyal and devoted manner in which Messrs. Lovell and Williams carried out their duties. Without them, and their cheery optimism in the face of almost impossible obstacles, we would never have completed the journey, and this book would never have been written.

My thanks are also due to all those friends, acquaintances and even strangers who, by their never-failing kindness all along our route, turned what might have been a disappointing failure into an expedition of outstanding success.

A word of tribute also to our friend, Mr. D'Arcy Weatherbe, whose untiring championing of our cause helped us to overcome many of our preliminary difficulties and encouraged us to continue even when our first plans were defeated and our journey across Chinese Turkistan forbidden. He, to the great regret of us all, was unable

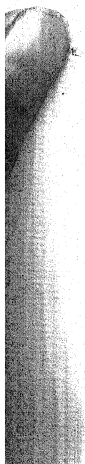
at the last moment to accompany us on the actual journey.

In conclusion, perhaps I may be forgiven if I make special mention of the part taken by my wife on the expedition. The thorough organisation of our commissariat—her special department—was in itself no mean achievement. In the forests of Cambodia, as in the wilds of Balūchistān and the deserts of the Middle East, our bodily comforts were as thoughtfully catered for as in the most luxurious hotels in Western Europe. On this, as on our previous journeys, she has shared to the utmost all the difficulties, discomforts and hardships of the way and may well claim to be the first woman to have accomplished this motor-journey from China to Chelsea.

D. McCALLUM

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Chelsea.

1930



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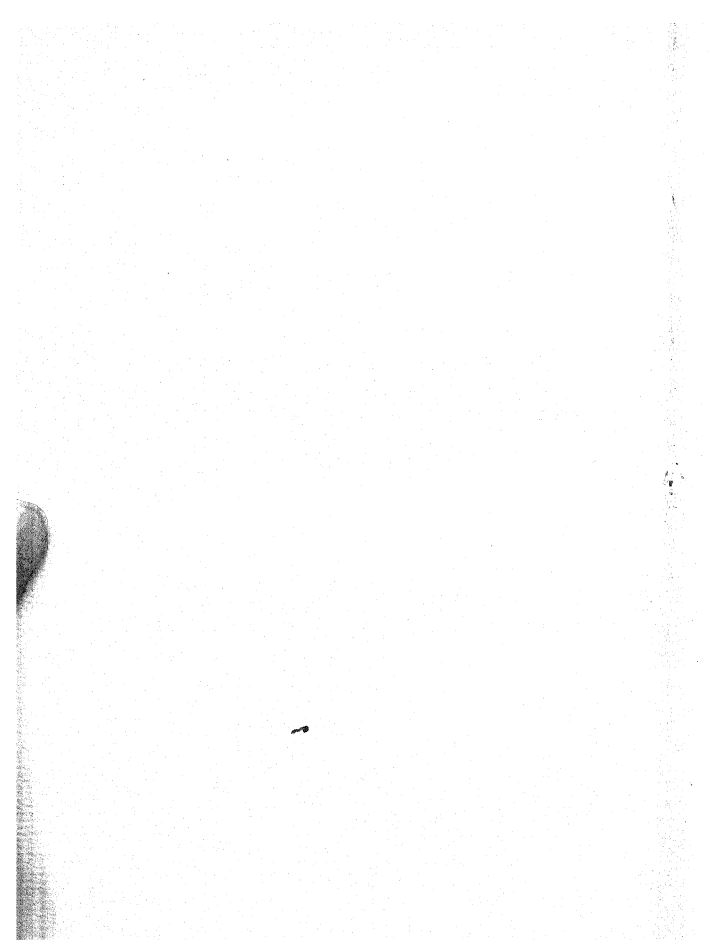
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INTRODUCTORY

IF three thousand years ago the Preacher could complain that 'of making books there is no end', how loudly he would lament the literary 'ochlesis' of to-day. And if literature be legion, then, of that legion, books of travel must constitute a goodly company; yet here is another added to the strength. If it be supernumerary, in days that clamour for economy, it must be laid to the charge of those many, friends or strangers, who have persuaded us to publish our impressions of the journey that we made by motor-car from China to Chelsea during the months from June 1927 to May 1928.

The possibility of such a journey was already in our minds before we left England in 1925; and it was with such a possibility in view that we bought and took with us the Buick car on which we eventually accomplished the journey. Then as we went East, 'cribbed, cabined and confined' in the small and crowded troopship that was taking my regiment to China, the idea of returning overland by car loomed only the more by contrast in our imagination and desire. We had already, too, had considerable experience of motor exploration, from days when I had ventured on an early motor-bicycle into unknown wilds of Africa, till the spring of 1925, when a series of exploratory journeys undertaken in the Near East subsequently to the War culminated in a trek by car as far east as Tehrān and Isfahān.¹

¹ The geographical orthography throughout the book is based, as far as possible, on the recommendations of the Royal Geographical Society's Permanent Committee on Geographical Names.

The second half of such a journey, therefore, had already been proved a practical proposition. But its greatest lure lay, perhaps, in the vast spaces, attractive because unknown to us, that the car would have to cover westwards from Peking to Tehrān, and, in those vast spaces, the magnet that was always strongest to attract was the magic name of golden Samarqand—the goal of boyhood's dreams. The most direct route from Peking to London would of course have been that through Siberia; but so extended a journey through Soviet territory was at the time out of the question, although, according to our original intentions, we still hoped to be able to cross Russian Turkistan as the easiest route from Chinese Turkistan into Persia, where we would strike the known ground of our previous journeying.

In actual fact we reached Persia via Indo-China, Siam, Malaya, Burma and India! Samarqand is still, for us, a dream—but a dream that we hope some day to realise, when and if opportunity enable us to carry out the journey of our original planning, if only to reap the reward of fourteen months of preparation. The account of that planning and that preparation, subjected as it was to change and counterchange by the disturbances of the political situation, would in itself fill a volume; and, as it is not devoid of interest, as a reflection of current conditions, or from the traveller's point of view, the first—and necessarily a long—chapter is devoted to such brief account of our abandoned schemes as will explain how the destined trek across Central Asia took so different a course.

CHAPTER I

'THE BEST LAID SCHEMES O' MICE AND MEN'

OUR earliest preparations for a journey across Central Asia by motor-car were inevitably in the nature of tentative inquiries as to the existence of *any* route practicable for cars. Even on the outward voyage we had begun making such inquiries of any travellers whom we had the fortune to meet; and, after my arrival in Tientsin, where my regiment, the East Yorkshire Regiment, was quartered, life became for eighteen months—in such leisure as regimental duties afforded—one endless inquiry upon one point after another, as the sequel will show.

Beyond the range of countries where a spoilt motoring community can obtain by return of post a detailed itinerary of any proposed journey, beyond even the range of countries where frontier troubles are alleviated by the International Triptyque, we had to endeavour to construct our own itinerary from the reports of any whose experience of travel in the interior of China made their opinion valuable, from such few maps as were obtainable of an area largely uncharted in any detail, and from information that could be gleaned from any and every kind of book or report of travel in China and Central Asia. Frequently, information as to tracks was available in respect only of animal transport; and their feasibility for car transport, if such had never been attempted, was in consequence left rather in the clouds, or more usually pronounced impossible, just because it had never been achieved.

Still, these earliest inquiries seemed to indicate the practicability of such a journey sufficiently for me to make application to the War Office for long leave in which to

carry it out. In this connexion it may be advisable to disarm possible criticism at once by explaining that our expedition from inception to accomplishment was an entirely private enterprise, having no connexion whatever with any Government or commercial concern, and financed only by my wife and myself. As an officer of the British Army, I had, of course, to obtain Government approval of my movements; and we were especially fortunate in that my application went forward under the very strong recommendation of General Luard, who was at that time General Officer Commanding, China Command,¹ and of General Burnett-Stuart at home. The War Office, appreciating private initiative in a British Army Officer, that much-maligned member of the community, and free of any anxiety on the ground of finance, supported our enterprise not only by granting the necessary long leave, but by approaching the Foreign, Colonial and India Offices with a view to facilitating our movements in and between the various countries through which we proposed to pass. It is needless to say how much we benefited, alike in our preparations and on our actual journey, from the general and active support of these departments of Government—both permanent officials and even the Secretaries of State themselves, whose nod, if temporary, is, for that time, of greatest moment.

Leave had been granted, and it remained to settle definitely our itinerary and make the necessary arrangements therefor. Our route—and here a map is indispensable to intelligibility—was originally planned on our earliest information as follows:

From Peking north-west along the line of the railway beyond the Great Wall to Kalgan; north-west still across Inner and Outer Mongolia—through territory mainly under Bolshevik influence—to Urga; west to Uliassutai and Kobdo; south to Urumtsi (Tihwafu), the capital of the great western province of Sinkiang; south again by

¹ In the summer of 1926 the *North China Command* came directly under the War Office; and early in 1927 the General Officer Commanding Shanghai Defence Force became G.O.C. *North China Command*.

the Chinese Imperial Trade Route through Turfan and Aksu to Kashgar; thence westward out of Chinese Turkistan, via the Terek Pass over the Pamir mountains, to Andijān, Samarqand and Bokhara in the Soviet territory of Russian Turkistan; west-south-west to the Persian frontier at Ashqabad; thence south-south-east to Meshed; across Persia via Tehrān, Hamadan, Kermānshāh and Khaniqin (on the frontier of Iraq) to Baghdad; across the Syrian Desert to Damascus and the Mediterranean Sea at Beirūt; north to Aleppo and Alexandretta; thence across Anatolia via Konia, Afiun-Qarahisar and Eski-Shehr to Constantinople, and, via the Balkans, Northern Italy or Austria, and France, to London.

Such a route sounds comparatively simple on paper and may still look so on a small-scale map. Unfortunately on a motor road map, if there were such, large sections of it would not exist, and others would appear and disappear on it according to the time of year!

Consideration of the route west of Meshed did not trouble us, as experience and information obtained in our previous journey to Isfahān had proved its feasibility from the point of view both of road and of fuel. Our troubles lay east of Persia. This, which we may call the 'northern' route across Central Asia, was soon bristling with difficulties. First, my leave was due in April 1927, and we were informed—or rather misinformed—that April was the worst month for the trek across Mongolia, as the rivers would be swollen with melting snows, and that winter would be the best time, as the freezing of the rivers would make their passage possible—a consoling thought for travellers who had found even the winter of Peking excessive after years spent in tropical countries. Further, there might be trouble with Bolsheviki on the road to Urga. Then, information as to the next stretch from Urga to Uliassutai was extremely vague and contradictory; and a Mr. Kent, of the British American Tobacco Company, who had ridden the whole distance from Urga across to Urumtsi, pronounced the further section from Uliassutai to Kobdo to be definitely impossible for cars, as it involved

some 450 miles of sand-dunes. Also, a convoy of six cars had been sent by a Tientsin bank from Kueihuacheng—a point on the railway not far west of Kalgan—to Urumtsi. Of these six, only one had arrived, and its Russian driver had ever since voiced the raven's 'never more'.

It must be understood that such information as the above was elicited, directly or more often indirectly, only as the result of inquiries in all possible directions; and these inquiries were all taking considerable time. In this connexion we discovered early and throughout our correspondence with scattered parts of the Chinese Empire the wonderful reliability of the Chinese Postal Administration—a government organisation, but with an international staff. Despite the troubled condition of the country, letters reached their destination; they might take weeks in transit, but they always arrived. The time factor was often puzzling. Telegrams to and from Urumtsi, which came to be a frequent necessity, took four days each way by one route, and, on one occasion, a month each way by another route; and our files contain a copy of a letter of inquiry with the reply thereto received a year later!

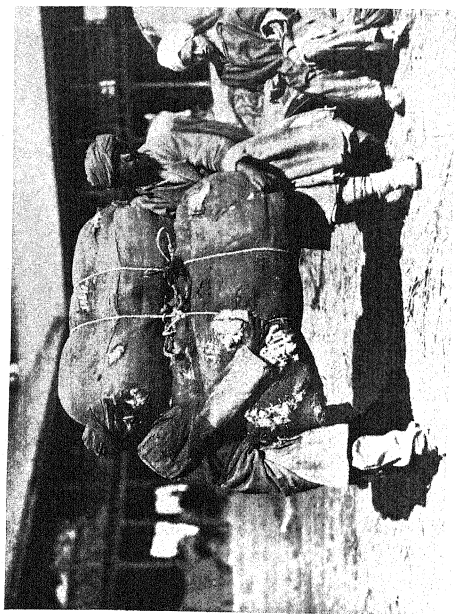
In prosecuting inquiries, we were met everywhere with the utmost kindness, if sometimes with a certain pessimism as to our project, and misinformation as to routes. We appreciated the kindness, ignored the pessimism and sifted the information—information obtained from the Legation officials in Peking, especially our own; from Buick agents whose dealings lay in the interior; from the Standard Oil and Asiatic Petroleum Companies, who had the question of our fuel supplies under consideration; from books and a Russian bookseller in Tientsin, who furnished us with sundry maps and accounts of Russian travellers; and above all from missionaries, British, French, American, German and Swedish, Protestant and Roman Catholic. It was in fact to two of these, Mr. and Mrs. Moore of the China Inland Mission, at that time in Tientsin, that we were indebted for the very detailed information that led to our adopting what we may call the 'southern' route from Peking to Kashgar.

To the map, again! This 'southern' route, like the other, followed the railway to Kalgan, but there, instead of going north, continued to follow the line to railhead at Paotowchen. From Paotowchen a motor-road had been made—by the Chinese general, Feng Yu-hsiang—running south-west along the valley of the Hwang Ho (Yellow River) through the territory of the Ordos tribes to a mission station at Ningsia; and this road, though allowed to fall into disrepair, was regarded as still practicable. From Ningsia the route ran south, still following the Yellow River, to Lanchow, from where it followed the old Chinese Imperial Trade Route, skirting the Gobi desert through Liangchow and Suchow to Ansi-chow. From there it crossed the desert to the welcome oasis of Hami, and so to Turfan and Urumtsi, our supply base in western China, as on the 'northern' route. From Urumtsi we still proposed to proceed as previously planned.

For this route from Paotowchen we had the advantage of fairly detailed information as to distances and halts, obtained from a Russian ex-officer, and for the section from Lanchow to Urumtsi the further and greater advantage of permission to use reliable and detailed maps compiled by Mr. and Mrs. Moore from information supplied to them by the late General Pereira and from their own personal observations and experience. It was important, too, that this route followed through its greater length an age-old Trade Route, commonly known as the Silk Route, by which for centuries the silks, jade, ivory and other wares of Chinese merchants had been regularly carried to the West, the road by which in days long past Buddhism had been brought from India to the East and in days quite recent Russian refugees had escaped from the chaos of the Revolution. This long-established use of the road was, of course, no guarantee for motor-cars, but it seemed to offer better promise than the 'northern' route, which had landed one car out of six at Urumtsi—and that a wreck, after wandering across the Gobi Desert for five months, little less than the time that we were allowing ourselves for the whole journey to London.

These alternative routes converged at Urumtsi. We had still to consider the feasibility of our proposed itinerary from Urumtsi to Meshed. On this section, we were referred by the War Office to Army Headquarters in India, from whom we received most valuable advice both in our preparations for making the journey from Kashgar and on the journey which we eventually had to make through India itself. We had too the advantage of information from such eminent travellers and explorers as Sir Aurel Stein, the archaeologist, and Mr. C. P. Skrine and Colonel Etherton, whose knowledge and writings about Central Asia are invaluable to any traveller. They were enthusiastic but not encouraging. Major Gillan, the then British Consul-General at Kashgar, informed us that no car had been nearer than Urumtsi. A motor cycle had done the journey in six coolie-loads! But a cart-track ran circuitously across the eastern Tien Shan; and what carts could do, a motor-car might accomplish. So we considered our route feasible as far as Kashgar; but there we were blocked by an impassable barrier of mountains. Mr. Skrine pronounced the whole of the main Tien Shan and Karakoram ranges impossible for wheeled transport; and Sir Aurel Stein concurred in dismissing as impracticable our proposed route to Andijān, as being a mere mule-path and useless for cars, and because of difficulties with the Bolsheviki. Then came news of an old carriage-road by the Tugart Pass due north of Kashgar. This would be both politically easier and more interesting; but this in its turn was reported impassable by car.

So we fell back again to Urumtsi. From there, according to various independent reports, it might be possible to motor to Kuldja, and thence by the Ili valley to Vernoe in Russian Semiryechensk. From Vernoe there was known to be a cart-track to Pishpek. Pishpek is a railhead of the Russian Central Asian Railways, and, if the worst befell, we could at least entrain there, although we hoped to be able to go by car via Aulie Ata and Chemkent to Tashkent, the capital of Russian Turkistan and a centre of Soviet influence and administration, and thence strike our



A load from a Yarkandi pack-pony at Srinagar.

original route at Samarcand. On this route we were referred by Russian refugees to a German missionary at Kuldja, Father Hufnagel, to whom we were indebted for useful information. But, unfortunately, just as we saw our way opening more hopefully to the west, we had to abandon all idea of travelling through Russian Turkistan, as Whitehall considered it inadvisable for us to touch Soviet territory at all and refused its approval of our proposed route.

This official decision meant that, in order to reach Persia, we would have to cross the mountains between Chinese Turkistan and India. Such passage was definitely impossible by car. We were faced, therefore, with these alternatives. We might abandon the cars at Kashgar, cross on ponies into Kashmir and purchase new cars in India on which to continue the homeward journey. Or, to accomplish the journey with the same cars with which we started it, we might, on arrival in Kashgar, dismantle the two cars into the smallest component parts, and carry them in pieces on pack-animals across the mountains. This would be no easy task, because of the roughness and narrowness of the tracks and because of the high altitudes at which much of the crossing would have to be done, the height of the passes ranging from 15,000 to 18,700 feet. We preferred the latter alternative, chiefly in the hope of proving its possibility; but it will be obvious that such a course involved an enormous amount of further inquiry. In this we again received invaluable advice from India, particularly from Major Hinde, of the Ladakh Agency in Kashmir, from Sir Aurel Stein, whose archaeological work had made him especially familiar with the ground which we had to traverse, and from Mr. Theodore Roosevelt, who, from his shooting expeditions, was well acquainted with the exigencies of travel in those parts.

There were two available routes across the mountains into Kashmir—the western via Gilgit, passing through Hunza territory, and the eastern from Yarkand to Leh by the Karakoram Pass. The main question was that of transport; and, as a reasonable load for a pack-animal was ascertained to be about 160 lb., the transport of both cars and

personnel involved a caravan of some eighty ponies. For this loading, it will be appreciated to what small dimensions the cars—engines, chassis, transmission, bodies, etc.—would have to be reduced. The bodies in themselves presented the chief difficulty. As the ideas of slinging a body between two ponies or of loading it on one pony were alike impossible because of the narrowness of the track, arrangements were to be made before we started to cut the body in half and rivet the halves together with special grooving, apart from bolting, to make them as safe as they would originally have been for the arduous road-work that they had to accomplish. To perform the work of dismantling the cars at Kashgar and the longer job of reassembling them in Kashmir we engaged a second qualified engineer instead of the driver whom we had proposed to have. The engineers estimated that, having done their own dismantling, they would be able to reassemble the cars in a month's time, the rewiring involving proportionately the greatest expenditure of time.

The size of our proposed caravan precluded the use of the Gilgit route, the amount of traffic over which has to be most carefully regulated by the Government authorities. Our arrangements were accordingly made for continuing our 'southern' route from Urumtsi to Kashgar and thence *via* Yarkand over the Karakoram Pass to Leh and Srinagar, the capital of the State of Kashmir. The War Office had, indeed, expressed surprise that I should wish my wife to walk with me across the Himalayas. My unofficial comment was that personally I loathed anything in the nature of walking, whereas my wife would be only too pleased to walk all the way if time permitted; and when it was pointed out that it would be very much easier and safer for her to cross the mountains into India with me than to trek back alone to Peking across 3000 miles of comparative desert, we were officially allowed to 'carry on'.

Meanwhile, we were busily occupied with our equipment. The second car was bought and, as explained, two engineers engaged. But cars and engineers were of little value over this 3000 miles without a guaranteed supply of



A Yarkandi and his yak near Srinagar.



fuel; and the arrangements for that supply occupied actually a full year from the time of our earliest inquiries in February 1926. Of the Peking end, more later. The main difficulty lay in ensuring supplies for the further stretch of our 'southern' route from Hami to Urumtsi and Kashgar. In this connection we fortunately discovered a Tientsin firm who had an agent at Urumtsi, but communication between this firm and its agent was distractingly slow, and almost to the last moment we were on tenterhooks as to whether our 'dumps' would be established in time to enable us to start assured of our supplies. Without this assurance, we could not have begun our journey, knowing of the expedition that set out from Tientsin for Urumtsi without arranging adequate supplies, with the result that they had to sit down at places for weeks at a time while they sent out camel caravans to bring them their petrol! From home we had been assured that it would take fully two years to arrange our line of 'dumps', but, in spite of delays, we did in point of fact receive telegraphic confirmation, before we were due to start, that our 'dumps' were established. For help in this, we were very largely indebted to Mr. John M'Lorn, of the Chinese Postal Administration, at Urumtsi, who, though a complete stranger to us, acted as our Post Office and Information Bureau at Urumtsi. Also, we had the help of Mr. Owen Lattimore, who, only a few months before our trip, succeeded in accomplishing by camel his most enterprising journey across Mongolia from Kueihuacheng to Urumtsi.¹

With these aids, we finally arranged our 'dumps'. The petrol came from Siberia to railhead at Semipalatinsk; from there to the frontier at Chuguchak—by cart in summer and by river-sleigh in winter—and thence to Urumtsi. We ordered 500 gallons. Of these 200 gallons were to be held at Urumtsi, 100 were to be sent eastwards to be available for us at Hami, and 200 west-south-west to Kuche to meet our needs over the last stretch from Urumtsi to Kashgar.

¹ See his book, *The Desert Road to Turkestan*, published by Messrs. Methuen, 1928.

At the eastern end, our supplies of fuel were more easily obtainable, especially as the Tientsin representatives of the Standard Oil Company of New York gave us the greatest assistance. From previous experience and warned by the losses sustained by other and bigger expeditions, we arranged for special packing of our supplies. To avoid wastage by friction—as much as seventy per cent. on one occasion—the petrol was to be carried in a hundred specially prepared wooden cases, each case holding two doubly soldered four-gallon tins separated by a wooden partition. But, if supply was simple, it was not so simple a matter to get this fuel and other supplies sent forward. For trouble had now arisen along the early stages of our route owing to the reappearance on the horizon of General Feng Yuhsiang, best known as 'the Christian General'; and a brief reference to the complications of Chinese affairs may here be permitted as a factor affecting our arrangements at various points.

Even if we could confine ourselves to the north of China—and we cannot entirely—it would still be impossible to give in so brief compass any adequate conception of the kaleidoscopic condition of the country, overrun as it was by the warring factions of the different *tuchuns*, or military governors, whose alliances with, and disaffections from, each other, confusing in themselves, were further complicated by the treacherous activities of their subordinates. 'The Christian General', for example, with whom we are particularly concerned, came to the forefront in just such a manner some six years after the World War Armistice. But even those six years are years of internal and internecine strife; and for background you have the big cleavage between North and South.

Nominally, the Peking Government still existed as the Central Government of the Empire, under the Presidency of Hsu Shih-chang, an ex-Viceroy, who was, however, of much less weight than the Premier, Tuan Chi-jui, originally a military commander and intermittently a minister,

subordinate or Prime, of the Republic since its inception in 1911. But that Government was in danger from two sources. Tuan actually fell from power in 1920 through conflict with one of these—the combination of three great war-lords of the north, Chang Tso-lin, the autocrat of Manchuria, Tsao-Kun, the 'tuchun' of Chihli (the province in which Peking lies) and Wu P'ei-fu. The last, officially subordinate to Tsao-Kun, but undoubtedly his superior in statesmanship, a brilliant scholar and equally able commander, was for some years the Peking Government's chief protection against its second danger—the rival southern government of Canton. For here, in the spring of 1921, Sun Yat-sen, famous as first President of the Chinese Republic at its formation in 1911, was again elected under the same title. But on this occasion his election and his title were a challenge from the South to the North; and behind him was the Kuo Min Tang, the party that sprang from the original revolutionary movement, essentially nationalist and anti-foreign in its attitude, with extremists in whom the Bolsheviki were to find ready listeners for their propaganda.

But the armies of the Southern Republic were still afar; and, before their victorious advance to the north, Peking was to be for several years the cockpit for the battles of the northern war-lords. Twelve months after this coup at Canton, Chang Tso-lin and Wu P'ei-fu were at war. The former had to withdraw to Manchuria, and Wu was left master of the military situation—but not of the political. His hopes of achieving any political stability in the north were soon thwarted, and the improbability of their realisation reflected best, perhaps, by the election to the Presidency, in the following year, of his old superior, Tsao-Kun—an election effected, according to common report, by a bribe of five hundred dollars to each elector. And Tsao-Kun had once been a hawker of fish!

A year later, in the autumn of 1924, Feng Yu-hsiang, 'the Christian General', came to the fore. Appointed Governor of Shansi, the province west of Chihli, in 1921, he had been moved to Peking and had taken part in Wu's

successful campaign against Chang Tso-lin in 1922. But now he was to be instrumental in Chang's revenge upon Wu. For the latter, involved by one of his supporters in fresh military operations, found himself faced not only with opposition from his old enemy, Chang, but with the treachery of his subordinate, Feng, who, left in charge of the Peking forces, 'ratted' and, 'ratting', compelled Wu to retreat to the Yangtze Kiang valley. Feng was master of Peking. He deposed the fish-hawking President and drove Pu Yi, the ex-Emperor, from the palace of his retirement; and by the end of the year he is co-operating or rather intriguing with all his old master's enemies, Chang Tso-lin, Tuan Chi-jui, the Premier of earlier years, and even Sun Yat-sen. But by the spring of 1925 Sun Yat-sen was dead; and the hopes of a unified government were already dwindling before the inevitable rivalry of Chang and Feng.

Chang was hampered in the struggle by the need of maintaining his long line of communications to Mukden, and, like Wu, by the defections of his subordinates, in particular Kuo Sung-ling, whom he eventually overwhelmed, and Li Ching-lin, whom Chang himself had made military governor of Chihli. These difficulties had enabled Feng to control 'the Seat of Government' throughout 1925, and his position was strengthened by the capture of Tientsin at the close of the year.

Of these latter operations I had personal experience, as my regiment had by this time been sent out to Tientsin. It will be appreciated that we were not without occupation in safeguarding the foreign population amid the continual movements of the troops of these warring factions, as they strove with varying fortune for control of the area surrounding the capital and its port. The best comment upon the situation is, perhaps, that of the three leaders who were striving for the possession of Tientsin, Chang Tso-lin first achieved fame as a bandit-chief; Li Ching-lin, his rebellious subordinate, who felt himself able to make a bid for supremacy in the north, had recently been a comprador in Tientsin; and Feng Yu-

hsiang, 'the Christian', had betrayed his master to join forces with the man with whom he was now struggling for the mastery.

The beginning of 1926 saw not only a new advance of Chang upon Peking and Tientsin, but the reappearance on the horizon of Wu from Central China. In fact, the old enemies united and together drove Feng's army—the Kuo Min Chun—from Peking to the north-west. For the greater part of the year they were in comparatively peaceful mastery of their own spheres, Chang in the north and Wu in the central districts of the Yangtze Kiang, with Feng's army lying to the north-west, deserted by Feng, who, at their first movement, had withdrawn into the obscurity of Mongolia.

With Feng's reappearance from Mongolia we may return from our digression into Chinese affairs and take up the story of our arrangements for the journey across China. It is generally understood that in his retirement Feng went to Moscow, from where he seems to have returned with pronounced Bolshevik sympathies, which inclined him to a new policy of *rapprochement* with the advancing nationalist forces of the Southern Kuo Min Tang. As events have proved, he was now 'backing the right horse'.

Our particular concern was that his army was drawn up practically on a north-and-south line between Urga and Lanchow, with a tendency further south. This obviously cut across the early stage of our route; and our plans were accordingly amended to enable us to outflank not so much Feng's army as the bandits who would be likely to be hanging on the outskirts of that army at the points where it touched the fringes of civilisation. Our amended scheme was to pick up our stores at Kalgan, go north some hundred miles on the Urga road to Holonoso, where an influential Swede, Larsen, had his farm, and thence strike across the desert, to join our previous route at Suchow, via Sharamurun. We thus hoped to avoid

bandits, as we would probably encounter on such a route only the Mongolian nomads of the desert, wild but supposedly neutral, who make their homes in those quaint mushroom 'yurts', made of a trellis framework, felt-wadded against the rigours of a Mongolian winter.

With this amended route, then, we had to arrange our petrol 'dumps' to cover the opening stretch as far as Hami. This necessitated a camel caravan from Kalgan. As it would have involved too great a delay to send out one of our own expedition to lay down these dumps, we had to find a reliable foreigner, and for this purpose we engaged a German, Böckenkamp, who was to go to Kalgan, collect his caravan of some thirty-five camels and have the dumps laid—in safe caches, with monks or missionaries—as far as Suchow, by the time that we reached that town in the cars. Timing was, therefore, a matter of importance. Further, we had to arrange with the postal authorities for his drawing money at various points, to cover his expenses; and also to obtain for him the necessary permits from the Chinese authorities.

As these three points of timing, money and permits affected materially the whole question of the journey, and constituted no small part of its preparation, any account of our arrangements would be incomplete without some reference to them.

The timing of the expedition was, perhaps, the most important consideration. In a word, we were due to start in April. In spite of our earliest information already referred to—and this only shows one of our difficulties, namely, that of obtaining reliable information—we had since ascertained that the intense cold made the Gobi (*i.e.* desert) impossible for us after September or before April. If this applied to us, it applied still more to the cars. At the same time, it would be necessary to leave Kashgar by the end of June to avoid crossing into India when the snows would have begun to melt. We had not, therefore, any appreciable margin of time against unforeseen contingencies on the journey across China, and would have to keep strictly to our time-table.

The difficulty of money arose from the fact that, like Bökenkampf, we could not venture into the wilds of Asia, carrying it on our persons. Although we hoped to escape bandits, the risk of robbery was too great. Payment for supplies from the eastern end was, of course, easily arranged at Tientsin. We made arrangements, too, with the Tientsin firm whose agents at Urumtsi were in charge of our petrol supplies from the Urumtsi base, to put at our disposal such sums as we would require at that stage of the journey. But, to enable us to have funds available at Kashgar, the Peking branch of the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China had to communicate with their Indian branches whose only possible course was to ask the Government of India to instruct the British Consul-General at Kashgar to put at our disposal funds up to an agreed amount, which had to be transferred along those channels; and it was, of course, at Kashgar that funds were particularly necessary to meet the cost of the extensive caravan required for the crossing into India.

The last but not the least of these difficulties was the obtaining of the necessary passports—a procedure greatly facilitated by the kindly offices of our Legation in Peking and by the fact that, from the end of November 1926, I was actually stationed at Peking as the Commandant of the British Legation Guard; but, on the other hand, seriously complicated by the activities of the Chinese military. The proximity of these activities will be appreciated, if it is realised that the Fengtien command, Chang Tso-lin's forces, were at the end of the year making preparations to clear the Peking-Suiyuan railway entirely of Kuo Min Chun, that is Feng's army, which we last saw concentrating on the north-west.

Throughout our preparations, we had the valuable support of the British minister, Sir Miles Lampson, and of Mr. O'Malley, Chargé d'Affaires before the latter's arrival; Mr. O'Malley, as a student of Russian affairs, being particularly interested in our projected attempt to cross Central Asia. It was, in fact, at a dinner given by our Minister that I was introduced to Chang Tso-lin, whose

nod was the sanction of our enterprise. Although I was introduced as 'the mad British officer who wanted to motor to Kashgar and into India', he gave a most attentive hearing to a detailed account of our plans and arrangements, but rather confirmed the introduction in his reply: 'Most interesting but quite impossible'. His son, Chang Hsueh Liang—'the young Marshal', as he was then called¹—was even more interested in our scheme, and assured us that he would have been delighted to go with us, had he not been occupied with military operations against his father's enemies!

Chang's nod, however, even though vital, was, if given, the matter of a moment. But the journey, even into India, involved much more. Apart from our British passports, to cover us throughout, apart from official permits from the Government of India to cross from Kashgar into Kashmir, we had, for the Chinese part of the journey, to obtain passports and arms permits for the individuals of our party from the Wai Chiao Pu, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to cover not Chinese territory as a whole, but the separate, specific areas through which we might have to pass—Chihli, Shansi, Shensi, Kansu, Chahar, Suiyuan, Inner Mongolia and Sinkiang.

Sinkiang presented especial difficulty. This vast western province, the Chinese Turkistan of most English maps, we were first to touch near the frontier town or village of Hsing-Hsing-Hsia, between Ansi-chow and Hami. Its governor, General Yang, nominally responsible to the Government of Peking, could, from the safe distance of his capital at Urumtsi, exercise a virtually autocratic control; and, although we might be armed with the authority of Chang Tso-lin, we had, independently, to make certain that we should not reach that far-flung outpost only to find further advance denied us at the whim of a governor who could afford to despise Chang Tso-lin's authority. The possibility of such a set-back seemed the greater, as we heard from various sources that General

¹ On his father's assassination, he succeeded him as the War-Lord of Manchuria.

Yang was inclined to view with the greatest suspicion the advent of anything so menacing as a motor-car. The arrangement of our westward dumps, therefore, and the arrival of our two cars, heavily equipped, if harmless, were likely to provoke considerable suspicion; and we appealed to the Chinese postal authorities at Urumtsi to intervene on our behalf with General Yang and persuade him that we really were but harmless travellers. In fine, we obtained his authority to cross the province only after giving a specific guarantee that we were guiltless of any political designs and would go straight through by our scheduled route without any delays.

To the Peking Government and Chang Tso-lin we had to give another sort of guarantee, namely, that we should hold neither the Chinese Government nor the Fengtien military authorities responsible for the safety of the personnel or property of our party. Against this guarantee, we surely deserved the passports of the Wai Chiao Pu and the Minister of War, and the Marshal's special letter of permit to the military authorities whose lines we might have to cross.

It was, in fact, in this immediate sphere of military activity that trouble was experienced. Our petrol and stores from Tientsin were to be sent by train to Kalgan, but, owing to the fighting in the early weeks of 1927, no traffic was allowed on the railway, which was in the hands of the military. A permit, however, for its transport was at last obtained, and Bökenkamp, our 'dumper', was able to start for Kalgan early in February. His caravan had been obtained only with the greatest difficulty. Apart from the fact that the military had been commandeering for transport purposes any camels on which they could lay hands, just as they had commandeered rail transport, he was faced, in his attempts to obtain camels, with the formidable rivalry of Dr. Sven Hedin, who was making arrangements to set out into Mongolia with a big expedition in the following month. Bökenkamp's task was the harder, as the control of supply was very largely in the hands of the man Larsen, whose headquarters at Holonoso

were our objective under our latest plan of striking north from Kalgan into the desert; and Larsen was not only a quasi-prince among the Mongol tribesmen but actually transport officer to Dr. Sven Hedin. Still, in spite of these difficulties, our camel-caravan was ready to set out from Kalgan; and almost at the same time we had cabled advice from Urumtsi that our western 'dumps' were established.

At last, everything seemed in order and our road to India clear, when we were brought up against an insuperable barrier—War Office instructions, cancelling permission for the journey across China. It will be recalled that, with the *rapprochement* of the Southern nationalist forces and Feng's Kuo Min Chun, who were concentrating on Kalgan, there was, early in 1927, a violent recrudescence of the anti-foreign activities of the summer of 1925. This new outburst came to a head in the Yangtze Kiang valley, culminating in what is generally familiar as the Hankow episode. Whitehall felt that, at a moment when British nationals were being busily evacuated from the interior of China, it would be inconsistently rash to allow five British to plunge into that interior.

It is needless to say what a severe blow this decision dealt us, at the very moment when our plans were mature, after fourteen months of preparation and an expenditure of several thousand pounds in effecting this preparation. The blow fell early in February, but for a fortnight we 'carried on', in case an abatement of anti-foreign activities might still allow us to begin our journey in April, especially as our revised route lay at a considerable distance from the zone of political disturbance. Personally we had no expectation of encountering trouble in our project of going north with our two cars into the desert, where we should have the company not only of Dr. Sven Hedin's expedition, but also of the Roy Chapman Andrews expedition of some fourteen cars.¹

¹ Actually, Dr. Sven Hedin was allowed to proceed into the interior only on the condition of taking with him a so-called Chinese scientific expedition; and the Third Asiatic Expedition under the leadership of Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews, failing, as we did, to penetrate the interior, had to postpone its proposed operations for another year.

When, however, it appeared that the decision must be irrevocable, we reluctantly recalled our camel-caravan and cancelled what could be cancelled. As my leave was due in April, I applied for permission, *faute de mieux*, to make the overland journey home by the only route remaining to us, that through Indo-China, Siam and Burma, to join the route of our previous planning in Kashmir, after crossing India by the Grand Trunk Road from Calcutta. New plans were made accordingly, and a hectic six weeks spent in cancelling the old, in trying to obtain information as to possible routes, and in arranging passport and credit facilities in the various countries through which we now had to pass.

On this occasion I had actually relinquished my command, left the Commandant's house, sold the furniture, and had most of our kit packed for home, when, on April 6, news came of the Nanking outrage. With the Nationalists marching, as it was supposed, on Peking and the attendant risks of further similar outbreaks of such a kind, I naturally felt it incumbent on me to return to duty in defence of our Legation and of our nationals in the capital. So, once again, the journey was postponed and all our arrangements were cancelled. With the coming of the summer, the situation had eased considerably, and Chinese military activity was slackening, as it usually did at that time of year. But the suitable time for the journey had passed, and we now proposed to postpone it until November, the most favourable time to begin it, as we should thus be travelling through Indo-China and Siam in the dry season; through Burma, India and Baluchistān in the cool of winter months; through Persia in the early spring and across Europe to an English summer.

So, with the prospect of another summer of Peking and its polo, I had acquired a new house and the necessary ponies, when circumstances connected with my leave compelled us suddenly to resuscitate our dormant schemes and start hurriedly in early June on the approved Southern trek. We were to learn only too well that the suitable time for the journey had passed, as subsequent chapters will show.

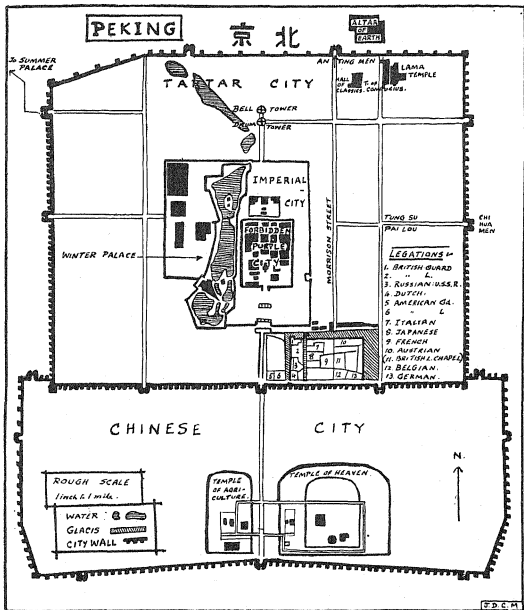
CHAPTER II

KHAN-BALUK

It seems impossible to begin any description of our journey from Peking without some reference to the capital itself and especially to the circumstances in which we came there and lived there.

The accompanying plan, bare outline as it is, may help to make the chapter more intelligible; but it must be realised that it is only bare outline and that Peking is—with the exception of the Forbidden City and its appendage, the Winter Palace—a labyrinth of intersecting streets and a maze of temples and other buildings. It is pre-eminently a city of fret and gilt, of grotesque gable and gargoyle, a city of ruins splendidly set; indeed, with the recent removal of the capital to Nanking,¹ it must look to be a city of the dead. But this is not the first time that Peking has been deserted in its long history—a history that goes back well beyond three thousand years, if we consider the various cities that have risen and fallen on its site. The isolated position of these capitals in the northern corner of the Empire may seem peculiar, for they were away from the sea, away from the populous and wealthy area of the Yangtze Kiang valley. But the view that you get of Peking from the Western Hills gives the key to her history and position. For they are the foothills of the great sweep of mountains that were, through the centuries, China's bulwark against Mongol and Tartar hordes; and they look down on the sea of green plain in which the changing rulers of China, native or alien, built their palaces, protected by a fortified city that would best control the passes

¹ 1928.



Plan of Peking.



through which invading hordes might come. From time to time the hordes came in and, coming, established themselves similarly against similar threats. Thus, towards the close of the thirteenth century, Kublai Khan saw fit to establish the capital of his vast Mongolian Empire on the site of Peking, where Kin or Kithan Tartars had already held their courts for three hundred years; and the great native dynasty of Ming, which recovered China from Mongol sway, although setting up its capital at Nanking to the south in fear of Mongol invasion, removed it once again to Peking as the best safeguard against that very fear. From the beginning of the fifteenth century, under the enlightened Yung-lo, it has remained the official seat of government until our own times.

The building of the great Tartar city on its present lines was undertaken by this Yung-lo, although the eastern and western walls are in effect those of Kublai's earlier capital of Khan-Baluk or 'city of the Khan', made famous through the world alike by the magnificence of Kublai's court and by the classic description of that magnificence bequeathed to history in Marco Polo's account of his travels. Some hundred years after Yung-lo, another Ming emperor designed the outer circuit of walls which comprise what is commonly known as the Chinese city. The original intention was to build a complete wall around the Tartar wall; but the cost was beyond even Chinese emperors, and the Chinese city remains a southern appendage. As it is, the circuit of outer walls is some thirty miles in length; and those of the Tartar city are fifty feet in height and forty to sixty in width. Within these lies the Imperial City, surrounded by another wall twenty feet high, and within that again 'the holy of holies', the 'Forbidden City', with its two miles of massive pink-washed walls, higher than those of the Imperial City and guarded by a moat forty yards wide. There have the emperors protected their palace and their person since the days of Yung-lo. Imagine their city set in a wealth of foliage, with the green of gardens and the blue of lakes that adorned their 'Winter' retreat, and you may have some slight picture of the beauty

of their seclusion. Imagine the gleaming yellow tiles of the palace roofs and temples, the blue dome of the great Temple of Heaven to the south, the Coal Hill of Ching-Shan with its five temple-crowned summits to the north, the successive lines of wall, with those massive gateways and block-houses far overtopping the walls themselves; and you may have some slight picture of the splendour in which Peking is set.

Within the Tartar city, abutting on its southern wall between the central and easterly gates of that wall, lies the Legation Quarter; and the prime object of the plan is to show clearly the position of that Quarter, as it has played rather a momentous part in Legation history.

To understand this history, we may indulge a brief retrospect to the relations of Europe with China. In 1644 the native Ming dynasty of previous mention gave way to the Manchus; and it was with this foreign (Tartar) dynasty that Europe had to treat until the Manchus gave way in their turn to the republican government of 1911. It is of importance to realise that, for nearly three centuries, the Chinese were in subjection to an admittedly foreign and therefore unpopular rule. For a century before the republic came into being, the emperors were faced with native hostility, latently at work in innumerable secret societies, or openly coming to a head, as in the serious outbreak of 1813, when the rebels penetrated the Forbidden City, and the more famous rebellion of the T'ai-p'ing which broke out some forty years later. Strangely enough, the cause of the rebel 'Heavenly King' prospered in the first instance because the Imperial Court was at war with Great Britain; and then collapsed because, the differences settled, Great Britain lent the Imperial Government the services of 'Chinese' Gordon. His 'Ever-victorious Army' broke the rebel forces which for twelve years had successfully held Nanking. But that is another story. It is the 'differences' with Great Britain that bring us to the Legation at Peking.

At the end of the eighteenth century Canton was the

only port open to European trade and there was no British Legation at Peking. In fact, of two embassies sent by George III. to endeavour to arrange better conditions for British traders at Canton, one was received only as the emissary of a 'tributary' state, and the other was not received at all, as the British ambassador refused to kowtow. Eventually, the galling restrictions laid upon the traders brought about the first war of 1840, so inappropriately called the 'Opium War'. Its direct outcome was the cession of Hongkong and the opening of four other ports to foreign trade. But, indirectly, it dealt a great blow to Manchu prestige; and in a few years the T'ai-p'ing rebellion was challenging that authority. In the middle of that rebellion anti-foreign hostility again broke out at Canton, and the second Chinese War opened at the close of 1857: Canton fell, and, by May 1858, the Taku forts. The proposed treaty of 1858 was ratified only in the autumn of 1860, and only with British troops dominating Peking. Twice the Chinese treacherously attacked—and on the latter occasion maltreated—the members of the British embassy sent to negotiate peace. Lord Elgin refused to treat except within the walls of the capital. The An-Ting gate was, therefore, surrendered; and so the British came to Peking.

Forty years later the Legation Quarter in Peking underwent its memorable siege at the hands of the Boxers and the Imperial troops. The story of that siege is common knowledge and needs no chronicle here, though the nature of the Boxer movement deserves attention. It was in essence a nationalist movement, and in the first instance it was, as such, a rebellion against Manchu domination as much as an anti-foreign outburst. It was only the statecraft of the Empress-Dowager Tsz'e Hsi that turned against the foreigner 'The Harmonious Fists' that were threatening her own house. That danger was temporarily averted when Imperialist and Boxer were united against the 'foreign devils'. But the 'foreign devil' held his own, if with bitter loss, a loss commemorated by the British in the 'Lest We Forget' Gate of our Legation; and, lest the

Chinese forget, there has been a guard attached to the chief Legations since 1901.

The plan shows the protection of the Legation Quarter—the 'Legation' wall, elaborately fortified, that covers the Quarter to west, north and east, and the sweep of glacis beyond, on which no building of any kind is permitted. Further, no Chinese are allowed on the stretch of high Tartar wall on which the Quarter abuts between the Chienmen and the Hatamen gates, and this wall is controlled by the foreign guards concerned. The British guard is responsible, like the others, for its appropriate section; and that is how we came to be in Peking at the end of 1925.

By then, a quarter of a century had passed since the Boxer siege—years full of momentous change for China. But even the little that has been said should have shown that this was the inevitable outcome of the century that closed with the murder of an English missionary on the last day of that century. Contact with the foreigner had awakened China to an intense national feeling, and, therewith, to her need of reform, if she were to hold her own against him. The danger that the Empress-Dowager had averted was of a century's growth, and, with her death in 1908, the Manchu dynasty was doomed, and the Nationalist development, fostered by Western education, came to fruition in the formation of the Republic at Nanking in 1911 and the Emperor's formal abdication in the following February. Only naturally the attempt to build a 'Western' republic out of the tumbling structure of a peculiarly oriental monarchy, centuries old, spelt a period of chaos, particularly in a country of such area and diversity. To-day, after years of civil war, China has a central government; it still remains to be seen whether it is a controlling government.

We saw, at Tientsin and at Peking, something of the years of civil war, of which a little has been said in the previous chapter. Armies came and went; leaders appeared, disappeared and reappeared. The staunch friends of to-day were the sworn foes of to-morrow. To the out-

sider it was a little inconvenient, rather complicated and verging on comic opera. It became proverbial to put your money on the man who seemed 'down and out'. In actual fact, we were on good terms with any and all. During our stay at Peking, Chang Tso-lin was in control, and relations between the Marshal and our Legation were of the friendliest. Indeed the Legation prided itself on keeping him after a dinner, enthralled with the music of our Legation Guard's band, when normally he would have withdrawn at the earliest possible moment to indulge his passion for Mah-jongg to the early hours.

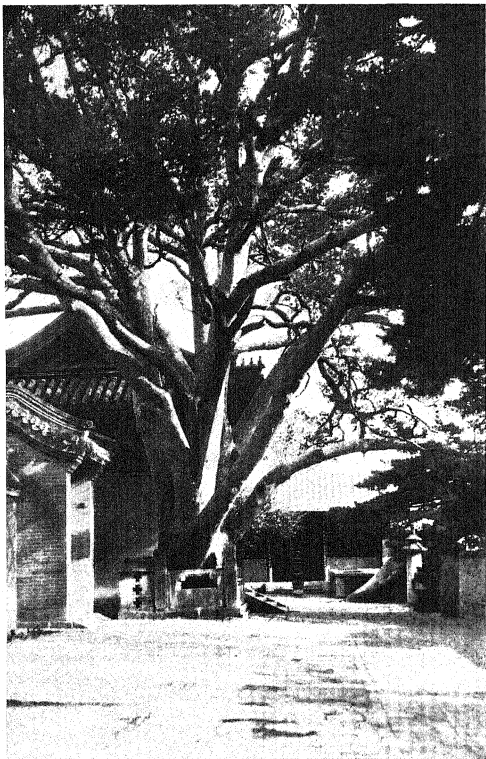
In spite of all the military activity, the salient fact remains that life went on at Peking very much as usual. Certainly, my morning duties in the orderly-room were punctuated by the passing of the Execution Squad. The procession, headed by a Chinese military band, with the executioner carrying aloft his axe, and the escort guarding its tumbril-load of condemned, was a daily spectacle for whoso ran to see. It should have operated, and was intended, let us hope, as a deterrent; nevertheless my wife had the greatest difficulty in keeping her ricksha-coolie from rushing her off to see it as soon as he heard the sound of the band in the distance! The condemned would, in the main, be bandits; for Chang Tso-lin, as an ex-bandit-chief, was a strict disciplinarian and dealt sternly with delinquents. Still, it remains that, such scenes apart, our activities were little interrupted. Our 'Drag' Hunt had its usual meets, and polo was played as vigorously as ever. Peking was still a centre of gaiety and entertainment. You could still search its store of interest in the countless monuments of its old glory, or enjoy the fascination of exploring the marketable treasures of its streets.

The streets are, perhaps, the greatest lure of Peking. For, though he may not be a soldier, the Chinese is *par excellence* a craftsman and a trader. In great wide streets you find lines of shops, red, blue and green; with flaring signs in gilt character that flash beneath the glare of sun or torch and paper lantern. In smaller, squalid streets, you find the same glare, the same roar of trade and a more per-

vading odour; but Peking is now reckoned pure and clean in comparison with other Chinese cities of the interior. Trades centre in streets, as the names indicate—Jade Street, Silk Street, Silver Street, Flower Street, Furniture Street, etc. Other names, less informative, are more alluring or, perhaps, more repellent—‘Fetid Hide’, ‘Dog’s tooth’, ‘Dog’s tail’, ‘Barbarian’, etc. Grand or mean, they are a treasure-house of arts and crafts—porcelain and jade-stone, embroideries, furs and rugs, curios of every shape and size, colour and design.

That, however, is as we saw the city of Peking. To-day, the trade is pouring south to Nanking, and thousands upon thousands of shops are closed. They would all be closed, if the trader could have his way, for he has no wish to linger in a city of ghosts, but Chinese trade is under strict regulation. The businesses are all graded on a scale of capital, and no business is licensed except under the guarantee of a business of a higher grade. As it is a matter of regulation to open any business, it is equally a matter of regulation to close it. A trader must satisfy the authorities that he is in a position to close it; and this control is now operating as a useful deterrent against the trader’s stampede to the new capital. In older days his settlement of affairs would have been regular and easy, as, by custom connected with religion, the Chinese settled all debts before the beginning of their New Year. Alas, like so many other customs, this excellent practice is now but slackly observed.

The abeyance of custom, especially of religious custom, is, of course, part and parcel of the new order of things. To take the two most impressive instances—there are no longer the great annual ceremonies in the Temples of Heaven and Agriculture. In olden days the Emperor went in procession to the Temple of Heaven at the winter solstice, to render account of himself and his governing and to take responsibility and pray for the forgiveness of Heaven in respect of any national disaster of the year, such as war or pestilence, flood or famine. Similarly, in the spring of the year, he went to the Temple of Agriculture and, with prayers, hallowed the year’s ploughing; turning,



'The White Pine' on a terrace of the Temple of Chieh-T'ai-ssu.

himself, three double furrows of the soil. In 1912 a reformed China discarded its Emperor, and only once has his successor, the President,¹ performed either of these ceremonies. The government of China has also discarded, with her old political institutions, much of her religion. She has adopted in their stead the political institutions of the West; it is still to be seen whether she will imbibe western Christianity. Of the new Central Government, indeed, a majority is claimed as 'officially' Christian; but the fact remains that not one per cent of China's vast population is Christian. That vast population, awakened to self-development by Western contact, is shedding the old order and the old gods. Just because of that contact and self-development, it has become intensely national, anti-foreign and, therewith, anti-Christian. But atheistic, heathen or Christian, awakened China, because of that established contact and because of her awakening, is, as she has never been before, a vast potentiality for evil or for good in the history of the world.

In leaving Peking, I would take you out once more to those Western Hills, where our chapter opened, for there something of the worship of the old gods still lingers in a setting of wonderful beauty. In this mountain fringe of the Hsi Shan the emperors and nobles of wealth and piety have built, through the centuries, almost countless temples to Buddha—some as sacred memorials, some as monuments of glory, some merely as safe retreats. There is in this connexion a story of a Dundee merchant, none too scrupulous or pious, who left £100,000 for the building of a church—a bequest that censorious and rather unchristian neighbours described as the biggest fire insurance premium ever paid! Some Buddhist temples in the Western Hills may have had a similar origin in the fears of wealthy mandarins whose piety developed as the end of their days drew on. But, from whatever cause, there they are set on the hill-sides or summits; and one of our last and most vivid impressions of China is that of our visit to the Temple of Chieh-T'ai-ssu and its sacred mountain.

¹ Yuan Shih Kai.

Unlike most of the temples, it lies south of the Hun Ho, which you have to cross in coming from Peking. That crossing is in itself of interest, as the river is spanned by the 'Marco Polo' bridge, marble and many-piered—so called, as it is described in detail in his book of *Travels*. We went by car as far as possible, and then walked, with donkeys for beasts of burden. With these, we ferried the river, and then had a two hours' walk. These Western Hills rise abruptly from the plain, and our walk became suddenly a steep climb up the stony path that led to the temple, a path that must have been trodden by generations of pilgrims. The temple itself, Imperial and claimed as the oldest in China, lies on the hill-side, with its red wall winding up and down, a vivid streak through the thick green foliage of its setting.

These Temples¹ are more in the nature of Christian monasteries. They are places of retreat for Buddhist monks and are under the control of an abbot. Like the old monasteries, they are, too, hospitals and hostels. That of Chieh-T'ai-ssu is of especial standing, with its Ordination Terrace, to which monks come to be ordained and from which they go, at will, far and wide to other Buddhist temples of China. Like the rest, it has its guest-rooms where all may enter; and it was in these that we spent the night before climbing to the mountain-top. Late evening brought with it the strange ritual of 'beating the drum'—a ceremony, picturesque and strangely impressive, with the old priest performing by candle-light in the great bare hall and the big statues of the Buddha looking mysterious and almost uncanny amid the light and shadow. On this broke the note of the bell chiming from the monastery bell-tower, and the strangely different tip-tap of wooden sticks on a wooden bowl; and, without, the tinkle of the little bells rung by the breeze on the stories of the two pagodas that adorn the Terrace.

With the morning we climbed to the mountain-top. Much of the cliff face is scarred with inscriptions cut by

¹ For an excellent detailed description see *The Temples of the Western Hills*, by G. E. Hubbard, La Librairie Française, Peking and Tientsin, 1923.

pious pilgrim monks, or with Buddhas carved in the rock; and on the summit, as so often elsewhere, you come suddenly on Buddhist shrine and Hermit Cave. From its top you look across the plain to the vast walled rectangle that is Peking, with the coloured roofs of its palaces and temples gleaming out of the foliage in which the city lies buried.

CHAPTER III

'ARMA VIRUMQUE'

A FEW words on the personnel and equipment of our expedition, to explain the constantly recurring 'we' of past and following pages, and the general circumstances attendant on our journeying.

The delays and changes already described affected our personnel as well as our plans. We had hoped in particular to have with us Mr. D'Arcy Weatherbe, whose wide experience of travel would have been invaluable. He had, in fact, taken a substantial part in our preparations for the trans-continental journey as originally planned; and, for the revised route through the Indo-China peninsula, his intimate knowledge of the border-lands of Siam and Burma would have been especially useful. But the later and sudden change of our plans made it impossible for him to accompany us.

In fine, then, our party consisted of four British. As already explained, my wife and I had had considerable experience of cross-country motoring, although the first half of our journey was unknown ground. The other two, Mr. Norman G. Lovell and Mr. F. G. Rumsey-Williams, were the expert motor engineers whom we had engaged for the intended journey across Central Asia and over the Himalayas. Mr. Lovell had done a certain amount of rough motoring in Central Asia before the War. During the War he had served with the Royal Naval Air Service and later with the Royal Air Force; and, subsequently to the War, he had accompanied the Roy Chapman Andrews Expedition into Mongolia and the Gobi, as assistant manager of its mechanical transport. Mr. Rumsey-

Williams, on the other hand, had had little actual experience of cross-country motoring. But he had joined the technical side of the Royal Flying Corps in days long before the War; and during the War served first with the Corps and later with the Royal Air Force. After the War he had gone out to China for Messrs. Vickers, and subsequently was attached for seven years to the Chinese Government Aviation Service, in charge of, and as instructor in the maintenance of, their British aeroplanes. It will be appreciated, therefore, that there was little of motor technicalities in which he was not expert.

Incidentally, his stories of the Chinese Government Aviation Service enlivened many hours of our journey; and the impression that they left on our minds was mainly one of that same neglect, waste and chaos so prevalent in other departments of Chinese administration during those sad, mad years of civil strife. *Chacun pour soi* seemed to be the motto of this, as of other, Chinese services; and, instead of the thoroughly efficient aviation service that might have been achieved with the opportunity, equipment and funds available, the actuality was one of opportunity wasted, equipment neglected and funds pocketed by the long line of officials through whose hands they passed. The unfortunate mechanics, the last in that line, were in fact frequently left penniless and starving. It was certainly a case of 'everyone for himself and God for us all', as the elephant said, strolling among the chickens.

To revert to our personnel, we had also throughout the journey what may be termed our 'floating population'—sometimes native servants, sometimes guides, interpreters or official police escorts. Through the whole of Indo-China these functions were combined in the person of Mai, our Annamite attendant. Officially he was our interpreter; but experience proved that our own French or Mr. Rumsey-Williams's Chinese were more effective media of communication than Mai's interpretation of the native tongue conveyed in his very broken French.

Later chapters will reveal some especial acquisitions of

personnel—native and British—in the course of our journey through India, Persia and Turkey.

Equipment covers a multitude of things. The chief of these, of course, were the cars, which one might almost have included as 'personnel'. They were both Buick 'Master-Six' models of 1925—the one a two-seater, the other a four-seater. As previously explained, we had taken the former out with us from London in 1925; and, in acquiring the second car in Peking at the end of 1926, we had a certain amount of difficulty in getting hold of a similar 1925 model in lieu of the later models more readily available. It was of importance to have the same model from the point of view of interchangeability of spare parts.

It should be noted that both cars were ordinary standard models, and we chose this particular make, as its worth for motor exploration had already been proved in practice in the Syrian, Mesopotamian and Arabian deserts. Our journey served only to confirm our choice. Throughout Asia we were struck by the scarcity of cars of British manufacture. In Indo-China, of course, the French Government, by a protective tariff of 180 per cent, has secured a monopoly to the French motoring industry. But, westward of that, the American car was ubiquitous in Asia. We found it crossing the vast flat of *padi* fields in Central Siam, or negotiating the roughest and steepest of tracks through the passes of the mountains of Northern India; and, westward again in Persia, we found it ploughing its way undaunted through the gluey mixture to which the rains reduce the surface of the great Kavar.

It seems a thousand pities that these great potential motor markets should not be developed for the sale of British light cars. Even on the great high-roads of British India the British car is conspicuous by its scarcity; and, whenever the possibilities of any such development of the sale of British cars in those parts were discussed, we invariably encountered that very complaint which, from our previous experience, had driven us to the purchase of American cars. Again and again we were told that hardly a British manufacturer constructed his cars with a view

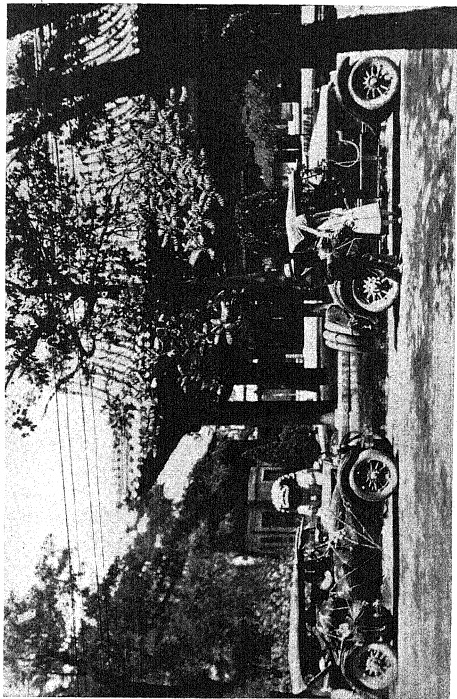
to rough overseas use, and that even the one or two that do so fail to observe what is surely the most important condition attaching to the development of the overseas market, namely, an adequate and reliable provision of spare parts. If even at home your small trader clings to his American delivery van, because of the ease of getting necessary ‘spares’ at a moment’s notice, it is not surprising that the British motoring industry fares so ill in countries of the East, when spare parts for American cars are obtainable in the most unbelievable and inaccessible spots. It is to be hoped that one day—and in the near future, if they are not to lose these markets altogether—some of the more enterprising of British manufacturers will seriously tackle this problem.

For what we may term rough overseas service, the question of a sufficiency of ground-clearance must be taken into consideration; the engine must be so constructed as to have an abundance of reserve power to overcome trouble—frequently sudden and unexpected—in places of difficulty; and the chassis, body-work, etc., must be on lines sufficiently strong to enable considerable addition of weight to be carried as occasion demands. In this regard I have in mind a particular British car encountered in south-eastern Asia, a car that satisfies the conditions enumerated, except that its manufacturers frankly admit the inability of the chassis to take any further weight than that *normally* loaded into an ordinary touring car.

When fully laden, and with my wife and myself on board, the two-seater of our journeying weighed just under two and three-quarter tons; the four-seater, fully laden, and with the two engineers and a native servant aboard, weighed nearly three and a half tons. Besides ourselves the cars had to carry our personal baggage, both for hot and for cold weather climate; camp equipment, that is, tent and tackle therefor, six bed-rolls complete, a fortnight’s iron-rations for six persons, and water-bags; fire-arms for all kinds of game-shooting as well as for self-defence, for the latter of which they were fortunately never required; photographic equipment, including a panoramic

and a cinematographic camera; and, in addition, a complete outfit of spare parts for the cars, together with workshop tool-kits and special gear for overcoming exceptional difficulties of terrain along the route. Except for the actual chassis and body-work, we carried with us, in effect, a third car in spare parts for engine, transmission—clutch, gear-box, shaft and back-axle complete—ignition system, etc. The schedule of 'spares' numbered considerably more than one hundred items; and, as 'one clutch assembly complete' constituted an item, the extent of what seemed only justifiable provision against possible emergencies will be appreciated. The dickey of the two-seater was reserved for these spares and for tool equipment, as it could be securely locked, and tedious unloading was to that extent obviated when the cars had to be put in a garage or left unattended.

Of special gear and fitments, a further word. Extra petrol-tanks were mounted on the running-boards, connected directly with the vacuum-tank. These additional tanks were capable of holding thirty-six gallons of petrol each, so that, including the normal petrol-tank at the back, each car could carry ninety-two gallons at one filling. This capacity ensured a run, without refilling, of nearly a thousand miles; and the advantage of such tanks for crossing desert and other out-of-the-way regions will be obvious to any who have had experience of this sort of travel. Further, they were of eighth-inch boiler-plating, with special fastenings; and this enabled them to take the weight of the bulk of the baggage, which was carried on top of them, secured to the sides of the cars by special hooks and brackets, while the necessary spare rims and tyres were carried on special brackets fitted to the back of each car. Hooks were fitted also—two on the front of each car, and two on the back—to facilitate hauling or towing in difficult places, should such be necessary, as it proved to be only too often. Experience is the best teacher; and we were determined to profit by the lessons of previous cross-country journeying. Against such difficulties of terrain, therefore, we carried an outfit of crow-bars,



The start from the British Legation, Peking—12th June 1927.



shovels, picks, tow-ropes, sledge-hammers, extra jacks, pulley-blocks and tackle therefor; and, in particular, two stretches of tarpaulin, which would serve as tentage, or covering for the cars, or as a serviceable roadway over shifting sand in lieu of the rabbit-wire netting more ordinarily carried against this difficulty. We carried also two lengths of wood planking to expedite the passage of those deep and narrow irrigation ditches that so often cause delay and even disaster on such a journey, but found their proved use in dry weather counteracted by the prevalent conditions of mud in which we had to travel.

'Forewarned is forearmed'; and information is certainly a very vital part of one's equipment for such a journey. But here we suffered seriously from our change of plans. For, whereas some fourteen months or more had been devoted to the preparation of our originally planned journey across Central Asia, very little time had been available for making preparations for the route through Indo-China that we were eventually compelled to take. For this reason we had, as regarded the earlier part of our journey, to depend to a large extent upon information gathered on the spur of the moment from anyone who had had any official, business or travelling connexion with south-eastern Asia.

In attempting elsewhere to undertake some unusual journey by motor-car, it has been my experience that information obtained from the majority of people is most unreliable. Some, probably to save themselves any further trouble, will say that a particular journey is impossible, invariably alleging as a proof of its impossibility the fact that it has never been accomplished before. That this should be the best reason for attempting it is, to such people, a sad but sure sign of incipient lunacy. Others, less honest and the more dangerous, furnish such details as they think that one would like to know, whether fact or fiction, failing to realise—let us hope—the disastrous results and really serious delays that such plausible and untrue reports may entail at a later stage of the journey. Others, again, dismiss at once as impossible for the motorist any route that is not

a first-class 'tarmac' road, allowing of comfortable travel at unusually high speeds.

In the course of our journey to India we encountered constantly all these types of informant, and became more than ever convinced that one can be sure of acquiring accurate information only by going oneself to obtain it on the spot! For instance, before we left Peking, we were assured by many, and indeed—if I am not rewarding great kindness by giving away official secrets—by members of the French Legation, that there were practically no roads at all in French Indo-China. We arrived there, therefore, prepared for a very rough journey, but found that, in actual fact, there are first-class roads throughout the length and much of the breadth of all that territory. In Siam and Burma, on the other hand, several people told us that certain routes were practicable for motors, whereas, on making proper investigation, we found them hopeless.

'Misinformation' apart, it was clear from the outset that the part of our journey most difficult of accomplishment by motor-car would be the crossing from Siam into Burma and again from Burma into India. In Hongkong the consensus of opinion was that such a route would be quite impossible by car, and we were strongly advised to go by boat direct from Hongkong to Calcutta. Nevertheless we determined to see for ourselves what conditions were like in Siam and Burma, and to make some attempt to carry out the overland journey. Unfortunately, weather conditions were entirely adverse, and, as will appear in due course, we were unable, because of rains, to follow the entirely overland route that *might* be possible in the dry season.

Good weather, indeed, might well be laid down as an essential, if not the first, item of one's equipment for such a journey; and one *could* time such a journey to suit the seasonal climate of the countries traversed. But, in this, we were left without choice. It has already been indicated that November or December would be the most suitable time at which to set out from China by this southern route. Leaving Peking in June, we encountered, throughout the

greater part of Indo-China and Siam, the prevalent monsoon rains and consequent floods, with the result that we reached Calcutta—and that by boat via Rangoon—when we should have been leaving Beirūt—some two months behind scheduled time. After a welcome spell of fine weather in crossing India, we again encountered the worst of conditions in Persia, rain and snow and bitter cold. At Beirūt, again, we were held up for five weeks by rains; and, later, in Anatolia. We finally reached London at the end of May 1928, some five months late—at the time, in fact, when we should probably have arrived, had we postponed our start until November!

But, if the clerk of the weather was unkind to us, the rest of officialdom atoned for his delinquencies. For a very necessary item of one's equipment for such a journey is provision against international frontier difficulties; and officialdom so facilitated this provision that, instead of having to overcome these international difficulties, we found our way prepared ahead of us. For this we remain deeply indebted to the active support of the departments of the British Government and to the kindly assistance of British and other authorities of the countries through which we had to pass.

CHAPTER IV

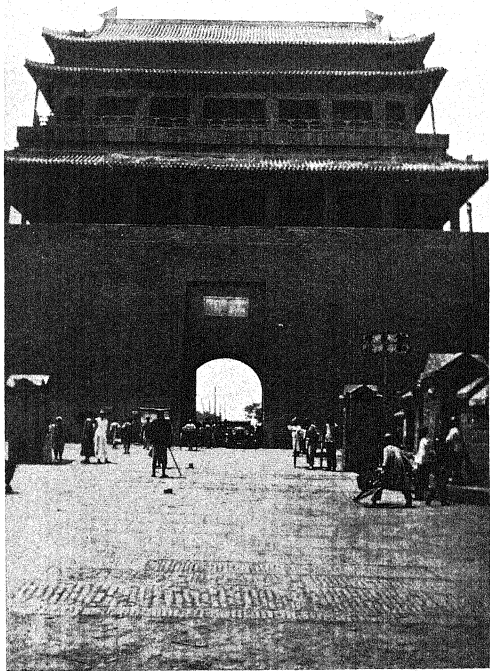
FAREWELLS TO CHINA

Itinerary: (by land) Peking, Tientsin; *(by sea)* Chefoo, Wei-hai-wei, Tsingtao, Shanghai, Hongkong, Haiphong; *(by land)* Hanoi, Langson, Dong-dang, 'La Porte de Chine'.

THE prevalent conditions of civil war, which had caused the abandonment of our transcontinental journey, made it even more impossible to travel overland by motor-car from North to South China. Even a railway journey of any length was a hopeless undertaking for any but Chinese military officials. It was necessary, in consequence, to ship the expedition, with equipment complete, from Tientsin to some point in, or near, South China from where the actual overland motor-journey could be begun. The nearest possible port from which this could be effected was Haiphong, in the north of French Indo-China; and arrangements were accordingly made for shipment thereto from Tientsin.

At noon on Sunday, the 12th of June 1927, our expedition started on its long westward trek from our house in the British Legation Guard. To the farewell cheers of the men of my Company, who lined the road from the barracks, we emerged from the British Legation Compound, and, proceeding by Morrison Street and the Tung-Su Pai-Lou, left Peking by the main Eastern Gate, to cover the eighty-seven¹ miles to Tientsin. Even this short strip of Chinese road had its possibilities of thrill for the motorist, either from war or weather. It was only too frequently the scene of movements of the Chinese military of one party or another, or of actually contending armies. There were several occasions, indeed, to our knowledge,

¹ From the British Legation in Peking to the British Concession in Tientsin.



Leaving Peking by the East Gate.



on which undisciplined Chinese troops severely assaulted motorists on this road, only because some of their ponies or transport-mules had shied at the sight or noise of the motor, upsetting their riders or the carts that they were drawing. Lovell himself was, on one occasion, very roughly handled by a mob of armed Chinese soldiers for just such a reason as this. War apart, the road is not recommended for motoring in the weeks of wet weather in the summer months, unless one travels after three or four dry days. Motoring is, then, still possible with good and careful driving, and if particular attention be paid to those parts of the road that are built upon an embankment across low-lying country; but, owing to the mud, one has very little control of the steering, and it has not been unknown for cars under such conditions to slide completely off the road.

We reached Tientsin without mishap from either source of trouble, having lunched *en route* with a brother-officer at the International Musketry Camp. Let me disarm fear at once by saying that these pages are not going to be a chronicle of meals and dormitories, nor in any way a 'diary' of the journey. The episode is mentioned as of incidental interest, because our friend's quarters were a Chinese temple, attached to a graveyard. Again and again in China you will find these sacred sites leased for the most secular purposes, but always on the condition that the owner has free access for the annual celebration of ancestral rites.

With Tientsin, as headquarters of the North China Command, and my own station for twelve months, we were already familiar. Something has been said of military activities, but we were more than ever struck by the very martial air that it had assumed. There seemed to be troops everywhere, troops of every nationality—reinforcements brought up to safeguard North China against excesses of Chinese Nationalists on their way to Peking.

For seventy years the history of Tientsin has been one of commercial development periodically impeded by

militarist activities, ever since 1858, indeed, when the Commercial Treaty was signed with Great Britain and France in the Hai Kuan or Sea View Temple of Tientsin. It was China's refusal to ratify this treaty that led to the bombardment of the port and the allied march on Peking, already described. A decade later, the Tientsin massacre resulted in the appointment of the famous Li Hung Chang as Viceroy of Chihli, and his Memorial Temple stands in Tientsin to-day to witness to the enlightened work of the greatest, perhaps, of Chinese statesmen. For thirty years, from his residence at Tientsin, he not only suppressed anti-foreign activity, but fostered an imperial foreign policy upon western lines that was largely instrumental in bringing about the root-upheaval of the new century which he did not survive to witness or control. Unfortunately, in the year of the Boxer outbreak he had been appointed Viceroy of Canton. His presence in the north might have availed much for peace; and it is significant that he was recalled to Peking and that his last efforts were spent in securing the signature of the peace-protocol which brought about a settlement of that ghastly outbreak.

Tientsin itself felt the brunt of that outbreak, occupied, as it came to be, by armed forces of the great European powers, and of Japan and the United States of America. Their garrisons remained to protect the foreign concessions, lying on both sides of the river below the native city; and the whole area was put under international administration. In effect, Tientsin gained. The ruins of the wall that had guarded the native city for five hundred years were utilised to make crooked paths straight and the rough places plain; and in a few years, in place of an overcrowded seed-bed of dirt and squalor, Tientsin became a city of open spaces and wide thoroughfares, a thriving port, furnished with electricity and other modern developments. It has not—it never had—the picturesqueness of a Peking; and here, therefore, one need not lament with those who sigh over the 'westernised' cities of the East. It is, and wishes to be, the chief Treaty Port of the north,

corresponding to Shanghai to the south; and, under its improved conditions, its trade was doubled in the decade preceding the troubles of the civil war. But once again it has suffered from militarist activities; and the recent change of capital may mean a serious blow to its economic prosperity.

It has had, too, other troubles to face. A glance at a map will show a mass of water-ways in and around the city. In 1917 the Grand Canal burst its banks, and again in 1924 there were serious floods. These involved the Concessions; and foreign as well as native enterprise has for ten years been tackling with extraordinary vigour the problem of reclamation—to witness, the work of the Pei-ho Conservancy Board.

Passage down the Pei-ho is slow, but not without interest, as reminiscent of much historical incident that brought the 'foreign devil' through treachery and travail to Tientsin and Peking. You see, too, a centre of one of China's great administrative services; for almost the whole stretch of the left bank from Tangku to the sea is devoted to salt manufacture, evidenced by the many salt mounds and windmills scattered across the vast expanse of plain. The trade in salt is a government monopoly, and the Salt Gabelle has been one of the great sources of Chinese Government revenue. As in the case of other effective revenue services, administration and collection were latterly in foreign hands; but the difficulties of the civil wars have seriously affected a source of revenue which reached its high-water mark some six years ago.

At Tangku we found a Chinese steamer in our coal-ing berth; and, when we eventually came alongside, we took the precaution of withdrawing to the Club, alike to keep cool and to avoid the coal-dust so liberally provided by the Kailan Mining Administration—let us be honest and admit it—an Anglo-Chinese co-operative company.

At the mouth of the Pei-ho lies Taku, famous for its

forts which offered such staunch resistance more than once to foreign troops. They were officially razed by the treaty of 1901, but were in fact used by Northern troops against their Southern brothers as late as 1926. Across Taku bar, and we were away to Chefoo and Wei-hai-wei. Both were full of naval and military activity. In the beautiful harbour of Chefoo, fleets of little sampans lay alongside the warships of Japan and the United States; and at Wei-hai-wei the Middlesex Regiment was being disembarked. A naval coaling station, leased to us thirty years ago, largely to counteract other 'foreign' influence at Port Arthur, Wei-hai-wei has had in recent times a peculiar interest. It was to the present British Commissioner there, Mr. Johnston, that the tutelage of the unfortunate ex-Emperor, Pu Yi, was formerly entrusted, and seldom can tutor have had more responsible or stressful charge. To realise a little of this, we need but imagine a seclusion subject to such conditions and interruptions as those already chronicled, a seclusion protected no longer by faithful Imperial Guards and Forbidden Walls, but straitly guarded by enemies and penetrable only by what the European of the East calls 'squeeze'—it is said that an egg found its way in at the cost of a dollar, and the prisoner his way out at the cost of a million!

The restful calm of an unbroken day at sea gave us time for such, and much other, reflection on the chaotic China that, in that calm, we really seemed at last to have left behind us. It was a relief to feel quit of the ubiquitous soldiery of North China, who had been dogging our steps for months. Regrets might linger for house and friends of Peking. Despite our sudden changes of plan, my wife, abetted by Chinese market-garden coolies, had, in a few weeks, fashioned a garden that we were loth to leave. You can manage those quick effects, when you can buy at your door anything from roses, pomegranates and lemon-trees—all in full flower—to pansies, snapdragons, petunias, nasturtiums, etc.—all amazingly cheap. But even these regrets faded in the prevailing peace and in the thought that we were at last embarked on our adventure; and the

very rest was welcome after our last few hectic weeks in Peking.

This was, indeed, the pleasantest stage of our sea journey. We were aboard s.s. *Yusang*, a Jardine boat of some two thousand tons, most comfortable, although so small; and we were treated like kings and queens by all the ship's officers and boys. By this time our only fellow-passenger (first-class) was a chief-officer of the line, who was on sick-leave, taking a true 'busman's holiday'; and our 'skipper', Captain Thompson—with an invaluable sense of humour and a glorious fund of stories, gleaned from experience on the Irrawaddy river-boats and other runs—made meal-time on the *Yusang* a veritable joy. Night, too, brought none of those annoying little companions who are only too apt to disturb one's sleep on small craft sailing China—and other—seas. Our only trouble was a cargo of dried fish in process of decay; but, mere man, I did not think even that very serious, though my wife despaired of using camp-bed or dresses again, as her valise and trunk were down one of the hatchways, quietly reposing on top of this unsavoury cargo!

The day's unbroken run brought us to the lights of Tsing-tao; and, with daylight, we steamed into Kiaochow Bay. The town still bears the stamp of the Germans, who built it and its up-to-date harbour and docks. Here, as in Togoland, the Cameroons and elsewhere, they certainly did not stint money in colonial development. After the expulsion of the Germans during the War, Tsing-tao—efficient, if ugly—came under Japanese control. The efficiency was maintained, the ugliness a little modified. Then, with peace, the Powers forced Japan to return the place to China; and, like so much else, run entirely by the Chinese, it seemed—when we saw it—to be falling rapidly into decay. A stabilised China may be more efficient in administration; but one listens a little fearfully to politicians who talk glibly of the rendition to China of Wei-hai-wei and various British Concessions in the Treaty Ports.

A day ashore gave us time to enjoy the very lovely

country of the Lao Shan, picturesque with its charm of pine-wooded hills. We climbed the mountain-side to the ruins of a German hospice, or, to speak more strictly, I was 'chaired'—a novel experience, which I enjoyed until pity for the poor coolies made me 'disembark' and join my wife, who had abandoned her chair at an early stage, from discomfort and fear rather than from feelings of sympathy!

Some five miles out from Tsing-tao, on the Lao Shan road, we were interested in discovering a tiny British war cemetery, nestling restful on a small hill-top. There were, I think, the graves of seven British soldiers who had evidently fallen in an attack on Tsing-tao on 5th November 1914; strangely, there was no mention of their regiment. It was indeed a far-flung outpost in which to find a memorial of the War's toll of British dead.

We left Tsing-tao on a choppy sea, which had driven one flotilla of the many American submarines in the bay to desert their depot-ship for shelter under the lee of land to the south; and, later, as we made away on our course for the Yangtze Kiang and Shanghai we learnt that, in our absence ashore, the *Yusang* had weathered another sort of storm. The more important of her deck-passengers had paid the ship's comprador extra money for leave to camp on one of the hatches. When the ship's officers, on arrival at Tsing-tao, wished to unload and load from this hatch, one man, dressed in coolie clothes, refused to move and no one could move him. Finally, they sent ashore for the local comprador of the line; but the latter, on coming aboard and taking one look at the deck-passenger or supposed coolie, retired hastily, with instructions to leave the coolie where he was. It transpired that the disreputable-looking individual was in reality a distinguished Chinese general travelling incognito to avoid the unwelcome attentions of political enemies!

A week out from Peking saw us berthed in Shanghai and bidding regretful farewells to the *Yusang*. Followed five days of fiendish noise—noise of trams and motors and, in those troubled days, motor-lorries full of troops, and, worst perhaps, noise of noisy people. The motor traffic

seemed more than that of London and Paris together; and confusion was only worse confounded, with the *mêlée* of rickshaws and trams, wheel-barrows and coolies carrying their loads on poles. Truly it is an international port; and, with the river full of ships—and warships, too—of various nations, it seemed hard to realise that only eighty odd years ago Shanghai was nothing but a river anchorage for junks.

Its military atmosphere was paramount. Even the tedious, ugly run up the river was of greater interest, as so many of the 'go-downs' had been converted into quarters for the troops. The barbed wire protecting the bounds of the International Settlement was but one evidence of the activities of the Shanghai Defence Force, which has admittedly made Shanghai the safest place in China, especially for the Chinese.

But China owes to the 'foreigner' of Shanghai a service of much older standing, that of the Imperial Maritime Customs, which had its origin in the days of the T'ai-p'ing rebellion. Good was born of ill; for the rebels' capture of the native city of Shanghai reduced the collection of customs to such confusion that the Chinese Government requested the foreign consuls of Shanghai to undertake this duty. Their supervision became permanent, and was so effective that it was extended to all Treaty Ports under the supreme control of a member of the British consular service as Inspector-General. The Maritime Customs Service has, in consequence, been administered for seventy years with efficiency and honesty, to the great benefit of the Chinese. To-day the country is clamouring for native control, and the whole question of tariffs is, at the time of writing, 'sub judice' at Nanking. Discretion therefore counsels silence, and we turn to lighter topics.

The International Settlement and the French—which, under a peculiar arrangement, is separate—both contain magnificent buildings, many of which lie along the famous stretch of Bund. There are shops that rival, I believe, London or Paris; as mere man it is not for me to say. There are certainly hotels of a luxury and tariff that prove

the 'taipans'¹ of Shanghai to be multi-millionaires. The 'Majestic', described locally as *le rendezvous du monde élégant*, is a super-palace of luxury, with its Empire banqueting-room, Louis XVI. drawing-room, Chinese smoking-room, Gothic library, embassy suite and I know not what else. We trod its famous ball-room and enjoyed the open-air cinema in its Italian garden; but we chose other lodging!

South of the French Concession, the streets of the native city typify all that is worst in the congestion of Chinese cities; but two pleasanter memories of it remain—one of 'Woo Sing Ding', the reputed original of the Willow Pattern tea-house; the other, of the quaint zig-zag bridge by which you cross to the City Temple. This latter is a type peculiarly Chinese, designed to thwart the approach of evil spirits; and there you touch the guiding 'influence' of much in Chinese belief and practice. Mr. Hubbard, in his book on *The Temples of the Western Hills*,² quotes what is surely the best illustration of this. The gateways of Peking and the rotunda of the Temple of Heaven are alike ninety-nine feet high. Why? Because good spirits had been ascertained to fly at a plane one hundred feet above ground level, so that—as he puts it—'had the roofs been built one foot higher, celestial heads would have bumped and their owners most likely have deserted Peking in disgust'.

Our journey from Shanghai to Hongkong was made in the *Empress of Asia*, a large C.P.R. liner, which had every luxury and yet succeeded in being far less comfortable than our homely little *Yusang*. These big boats, incidentally, have two captains, one who runs the ship, and another who runs the personnel. This will give an idea of the contrast in size; and, over that part of our journey, size may certainly have ensured our greater safety, if not our greater comfort. For we were here run-

¹ Commercial magnates.

² See Chapter II.

ning the gauntlet of pirate-infested seas, and before reaching Hongkong had, of course, to pass Bias Bay, the present G.H.Q. of Chinese piracy. Two boats, in fact—one sailing a day ahead of us, and the other a day later—were both raided. Usually, of course, it is the smaller boats of lines like the Chinese Steam Navigation Company that are attacked; but the whole coast is 'unhealthy' for anyone, and the seaward habitations—and inhabitants too—of Hongkong itself are liable to sudden raids from these pirates, like those of Norse rovers on our eastern shores in olden days. Indeed, this island area still lives up to the name of 'Ladrones', conferred on it centuries since by the early Portuguese navigators.

In Shanghai we had already experienced tremendous tropical downpours, and we found the heat of Hongkong almost at its worst. After attempting for two days to exist in an hotel on the foreshore, we had eventually to move our quarters to the cooler heights of the Peak. Even there we were constantly awakened by storms at night. Our beds were set on the veranda for coolness' sake; but, with open windows and the rain pouring in, we were driven to sleep inside, away from windows and rain, and, unfortunately, away from one's best chance of air.

Heat apart, we found Hongkong delightful and singularly beautiful. Victoria—to give the capital its proper title—is most attractive to see from the mainland, with its series of three terraces, rising from the 'Praya' or six-mile foreshore of commerce and shipping to the luxurious bungalows of 'the Peak' via the half-way belt of Government and other public buildings.

From the Peak Hotel itself, which lies on a shoulder beneath the shadow of the summit, you have a wonderful view. Looking northward, you see below you a harbour alive with its native population, born and borne of the water; and, beyond, the mainland, with its background of mountains. Southward, you look out to a sea studded with hill-crowned islands. It is a beautiful walk along the cliff path; and at night one might be in fairyland, with all the lights of Hongkong and the harbour gleaming so far

below against a background of dark hills or inky water. At times it is rather terrifying, as the circular path is often built out over a precipice and only a fairly low rail keeps one from the edge.

The seaward coast is, of course, a succession of beautiful bays. On the mainland itself, reached by ferry, you have the peninsula of Kowloon acquired under the Treaty of 1860, so often mentioned, and beyond that the New Territories, leased to us some thirty years ago. It is a mountainous and attractive stretch of country, and altogether interesting with its varied population. You have the hard-living Hakkas of the mountains, the Tankas, who live and labour afloat, and, in the valleys, the Puntis, who, like their Cantonese brothers, are agriculturists and traders. On the winding road through the Territory you come, through a famous gap, upon the wonderful rice-fields of the Shatin Valley—an area that through the centuries sent stocks of its 'super-rice' for Imperial consumption in the capital.

We were delayed some days in Hongkong because of damage done to the cars, both in loading in Tientsin and by the position in which they were stowed for the journey to Hongkong; they were brought there direct in another boat than ours. The average coasting steamer engaged in the China trade generally moors alongside the docks of the principal ports; and loading or unloading should be simple. It is to be hoped that before long the harbour authorities of all ports will be equipped with proper loading tackle for this particular kind of shipment, as at Hongkong and, of course, Singapore, Rangoon and Calcutta—the ports of our later experience. In Hongkong there is a special motor-car lighter, with its own crane, and provided with properly constructed platforms upon which the cars are stood before being lifted by the crane. Incidentally, the lighter took seven hours to reach the boat on which we were to proceed southward; and then our skipper was so anxious to be off, because of tides, that there was no time to off-load the platform. Personally, we were grateful, as it was very useful at Haiphong; but, in justice to ourselves,

we should say that it found its way back to its proper owners on the boat's return to Hongkong.

The small French coasting steamer, s.s. *Tonkin*, on which we accomplished the last stretch of this sea journey, provided a rough passage and an informative engineer. The latter, French, was frankly interesting on Indo-China and interestingly frank on the Chinese. Though *très sensible*, as he phrased it, he now preferred running over a Chinese native to running over a horse in his car. Personally, we hoped to be spared either alternative!

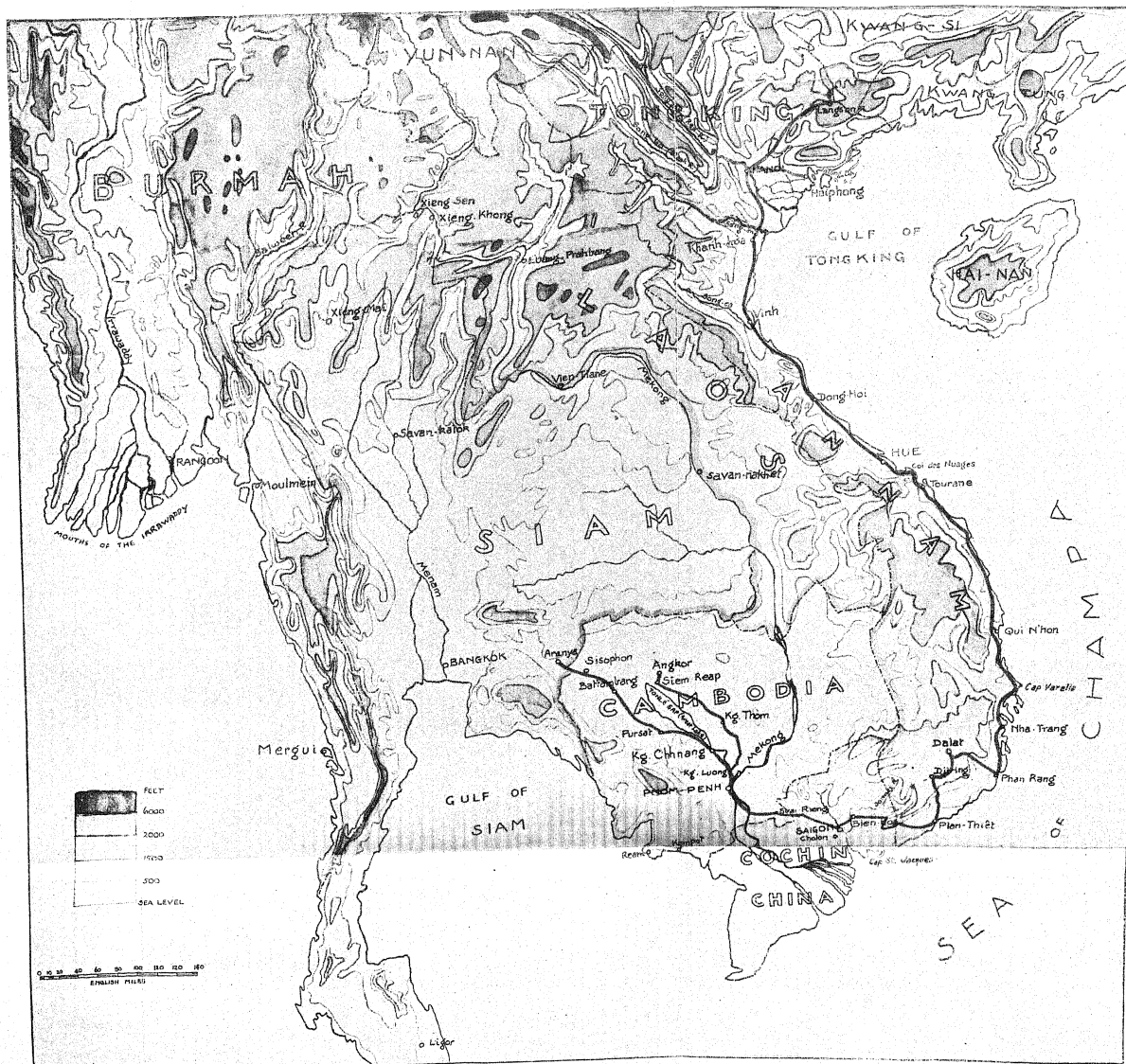
To reach Haiphong you have a long run through the Straits separating Hainan from the mainland, with low coast on either side and a very narrow channel, though the actual width of water is large. It was the prospect of this dangerous passage that had provoked our skipper's previous anxiety to avoid delay and consequent difficulties of tide. Later, you approach a little archipelago of volcanic islands, part of those that stud the famous Bay of Along, another ancient home of piracy, complete with pirate caves that are a wonder of stalactite and stalagmite. Then the river—which took nearly two hours to negotiate from mouth to harbour—with its outlook of low delta reclaimed from the sea, high volcanic rocks and low lines of rocky hills vanishing into the higher background of mountains. The river recalls those of West Africa, with its mangroves and swampy land, some under rice, some sown with palms; and Haiphong, as you approach, looks just like a West African town. Masses of flamboyant trees in full flower make a wonderful scarlet splash of colour here and there; but the houses, the hotel and the boulevards are French.

Indo-China, French or native, belongs to a later chapter. Here we have to pay our last farewell to China; and, to do so, we speed—by car at last, but without comment—to the Chinese frontier, reached via Hanoi and Langson, near to a place Dong-dang. From Hanoi, of course, we were striking north, and would have to retrace our steps; but we wished to begin our all-overland journey—as we hoped it would be—actually upon Chinese soil.

In actual fact we did; and our farewell looked at one moment to be as exciting as one could wish.

We were to leave South China by the age-old Mandarin Road running right through Indo-China to Siam. There is actually a gateway in the old Southern Wall known as 'La Porte de Chine'; and, for interest of record, we wished to take a photograph of this historic gateway as the true starting-point of our overland route. For this purpose one of the cars was backed up into the gateway, and my wife was in the act of focussing her camera when the Chinese officer in charge of the frontier detachment began gesticulating and jabbering in frenzied manner. What he apparently meant to convey was that we were forbidden to take photographs. Not realising this, however, my wife continued to manoeuvre for a position from which to take her photograph, quite unconscious of the storm she was raising. Williams, who was conversant with the dialect of North China, could not make head or tail of the Southerners' speech; and, suddenly, the officer and his men made a menacing rush at my wife. We hustled her out of the way, while some French soldiers who had been interested spectators very kindly intervened and saved what might have been an awkward situation. After effecting our escape we discovered the causes of our trouble. We had been definitely on Chinese soil even south of the Gate, as today's frontier is at a point some few hundred yards to the south of it; and, on this Chinese soil, we had been taking photographs as spies of Chang Tso-lin! This grotesque idea arose from the registration numbers on our cars. These were special numbers issued to members of the Legation Staffs in Peking; and the detachment of Southern Nationalists, seeing this number plate, conceived our harmless efforts at photography to be espionage on behalf of the hated war-lord of the North.

Thus, our last and brief farewell to China was only in keeping with the troublous conditions of that distressed country.



London, 1928.

Route followed.

I.—Map of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula.

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CHAPTER V

INDO-CHINA—A MOTORIST'S PARADISE

THE route that we actually followed in our cars from the frontier of South China through French Indo-China was, to all intents and purposes, the line of the famous Mandarin Road of ancient days, the highway from the Celestial Empire to Siam. To-day, under French administration, it is less romantic of nomenclature as *Route Coloniale No. 1*; and it is with this, its modern aspect, that the present chapter is concerned.

Until quite recent years transportation in Indo-China was only a matter of water-borne traffic or of coolie labour. Roads, therefore, were unnecessary, and did not exist save for one or two main arteries such as this *Route Mandarine*. To-day there are more than ten thousand kilometres of excellent first-class motoring roads throughout the length and—which is the greater achievement—the breadth of the land. During our stay in the country we covered over two thousand seven hundred miles in our cars, and, except for a few miles approaching the Siamese frontier, we might well have been on any of the modern highways of Western Europe.

In Malaya, too, there are excellent roads to carry the motor traffic of to-day, but with a marked difference. These were originally constructed for the use of animal-drawn vehicles and before the advent of the motor-car, with the result that they are much more tortuous and make motor-driving much more arduous than the modern motor-roads of Indo-China. These latter have been especially constructed with a view to carrying fast-moving traffic in safety. Wherever possible the roads are continued along

a straight line; and, where it is necessary to leave the straight line, the curves are very gentle and also banked on the outside to enable them to be taken with greater safety at fair speed. It was noticeable, also, that the roads were most efficiently marked with warning signs in regard to level-crossings, bridges, bad corners, etc., placed much further ahead of the obstacles to which they refer than is the custom in most countries, even in Western Europe.

It must be admitted that such precautions are necessary to safety, as the French colonial is as fond of speed as his brothers at home; and the Annamite chauffeur bids fair to rival his 'Protector' in this matter of speed, with an added recklessness and usually on less substantial machines, which enhance the feeling of insecurity. The ultra-modern native chauffeur is strangely garbed in Norfolk jacket open at the neck, with the latest thing in felt hats; but you will still see natives in native garb driving with bare feet. Fortunately, there is not a great volume of motor traffic. You meet in the main the cars of the French themselves, officials or traders, and the auto-buses which serve the whole length of the Mandarin Road. These latter link up the lengths of railway at present constructed, and for this purpose have the mail-trailer attached. Full to overflowing as a rule, alike with humanity and baggage, they present a formidable, if fleeting, picture; for they are soon past. The roads are not wide, but the pedestrian traffic, animal or human, is on the whole well trained and 'sides up' or obliterates itself with something of the same magic self-effacement that enables a fire engine to make its unimpeded way through a crowded London thoroughfare. Sometimes cyclists and pedestrians are so eager to efface themselves that, without any magic, they leave the road altogether and take refuge in rice-field or jungle, with ludicrous, unrehearsed effects in the case of the former!

There is, in this connexion, a curious survival of old custom. In the days of narrow tracks, when roads were not, the natives were wont perforce to walk in file; and you will still find the natives of to-day walking in single file, even on broad roads, the leader carrying on an animated con-

versation with the rear of the file without ever once looking round. These files contrast strangely and favourably with the serried and even linked ranks of pedestrians who are the motorist's bane in such Western thoroughfares as, say, King's Street, Hammersmith, or any of the streets of Inverness, to quote at random from bitter experience.

Buffaloes, however, are not always so tractable. We were held up for a distance of five miles on our return run from Langson to Hanoi by a careering herd of buffaloes, who seemed as mesmerised as those rabbits that one encounters in night driving at home. These buffaloes are ubiquitous, especially in Tongking and northern Annam; and we were impressed alike by their numbers and size, for they were pronouncedly larger than those that one had seen in Egypt or China. They are the special care of the Annamite boy, who herds them, even from the age of four, with surprising skill. In fact, his idea of bliss seems to be that of lying full length on a buffalo's back, with a bare rag for clothing, if that; while the buffalo's idea of bliss is to lie immersed in a mud-pool, with only his nostrils emerging to give him air. So the more amenable of them, unlike our careering herd, will often plunge off the roads into the swamped rice-fields of their labour or the mere mud-pools of their leisure.

But, on the whole, the traffic is slight. For native transport is still largely water-borne or by coolie labour and bullock-cart; and, slow moving as this latter is, it pulls in immediately to its proper side of the road—that is, the right—on the slightest sign of an approaching car.

There are, of course, as already indicated, considerable stretches of railway, constructed by the French—several hundred miles—and work is going on every day to complete the main trunk line from the northern capital of Hanoi in Tongking to Saigon, the capital of the colony of Cochin-China in the south. This already connects with South China by two lines, and will some day doubtless be linked with the Siamese railway system and thus with the Malay States. At present Cambodia, the south-westerly division of French Indo-China, is without railways; and

traffic there is, except for the Mandarin Road, entirely water-borne by the Mekong River and its tributaries or distributaries. In Annam, too, long sections between Vinh and Quang-tri in the north, and between Tourane and Nha-Trang in the centre and south, are only under construction; but, where such sections of the railway are unfinished, motor transport is unfailingly available.

It is a noticeable point of contrast that French Indo-China has concentrated on roads, Siam on railways. We shall encounter the latter in a later chapter. Here we must revert to the French roads. These really were excellent, first-class roads, properly constructed and metalled, and in many places covered also with 'tarmac'. In Annam the roads were, for hundreds of miles, constructed of laterite, which makes one of the best of running surfaces for motor-cars. There was dust in plenty, of course, and we travelled in column formation at a fair distance apart to avoid the following car's getting the leader's legacy of dust. The leader would keep a periodic look out, and go slow or stop if the second car failed to materialise. This would happen mainly on account of punctures—practically our sole source of road trouble. This is no reflection on our outfit of tyres, for we never once had a 'burst'. Nor was it that the road was bad, for trouble was always a question of puncture, traced to nails innumerable and to a spiky thorn of dangerous length that seemed to find its way on to the roads.

The roadway, in fact, is not only well made, but kept in good repair. You will find piles of metal, therefore, along its length, a possible source of trouble, if you happen to be on a narrow stretch and encounter other motor traffic, especially if of the dangerous native variety. The construction of the trunk road from Saigon to Hanoi was, I believe, a condition of the Treaty of August 1883 between France and Annam—a modern *corvée*; and its maintenance would appear to be a continuance of that same obligation. For the French official or trader, or for the traveller, the system bears excellent results; and the Annamite's labour should react to his great benefit in the future, whatever he may have to say of it to-day.

Frequently in the flat lands, especially of Tongking in the north, and of Saigon and Cambodia in the south, the road is built on embankments above flood-level, and travelling is therefore as easy in the rainy season as in the dry. Most of our journey was accomplished in the rainy season, which to the south dates from April to October almost to a day. This means tropical downpours, when they come, and not, as so many imagine, incessant rain. In our actual journey we were almost entirely free from rain during the day, until we neared Siam; it came conveniently in the evening. But of climatic conditions elsewhere. Apart from these flat lands, which constituted a goodly part of our journey, Annam provided the bulk of the hill sections. The principal of these are the crossing of the Col des Nuages to the north of Tourane; the climb up and down Cap Varella, a most picturesque headland to the north of Nha-Trang; and the further climb from sea-level, near Phan-Rang, inland to Dalat—five thousand feet up—and the descent thence through Djiring back to the coast at Phan-Thiêt. The Mandarin Road along the coast between these two places, Phan-Rang and Phan-Thiêt, has dissolved into a mere cart track; but the detour through Dalat provided some of the best scenery and the greatest interest of the journey through Indo-China. The road itself, as over the other hill sections, has been wonderfully engineered, with the result that the gradients are nowhere too steep; but, as a natural consequence of this, the road of necessity winds continually, and there are very many dangerous corners around which it is advisable to drive with great caution. The same applies to the only other important hill section of the route, the highlands near Langson, in the north of Tongking. Here we encountered a danger signal: '30 kms. of very bad road ahead'. But this meant only that the road was tortuous and narrow; and even passing other vehicles was a comparatively simple matter, if one went slowly. The notice was really indicative not of a bad road, but of the dangerous rate that is the Frenchman's normal speed.

Further, if the roads are good, they are also well served.

The Government telegraph and telephone systems are installed in practically every little village, and, if one wishes to reserve accommodation at a town or village ahead, or if one needs assistance in the event of a breakdown, a telegraph or telephone message is very quickly sent from the nearest post office to the place in question. Again, there are the auto-bus services already mentioned, covering the length of the Mandarin Road; and, in the event of trouble, one can nearly always persuade one of the drivers to carry a message or even to give one a helpful tow. In all the large towns there are several well-equipped motor garages. Indeed, in Hanoi and Saigon, we discovered with surprise what must surely be some of the most perfectly equipped motor garages in the whole of Asia. Enormous concrete buildings, divided into the various mechanical departments required; workmen and clerks 'timed in and out' as in any modern factory in Europe; excellent protection against fire or accident—all made us think that we had suddenly reached Paris or London rather than a comparatively small town in Far-Eastern Asia. In particular I cannot forbear to mention the 'Aviat' garage of Hanoi, who rendered us so efficient and courteous help towards our projected journey southward.

Most of the hotels and all the Government rest-houses have ordinary 'lock-up' garages, in which one's car can be safely stored for the night, and where one can obtain petrol and oil supplies. And so we come to the question of accommodation. In towns of any size and in practically all large villages served by the system of roads, there is either a properly established hotel or a government-controlled rest-house. Except for the large towns and cities the hotels are naturally not up to the standard of those of large Western cities; but those in which we stayed were quite clean, and plain but very well-cooked food was served. And yet, curiously enough, our worst experience of accommodation was in one of the two so-called first-class hotels in Saigon itself, the commercial capital of the country.

The Government rest-houses have been set up to serve as relay-stations for the postal service, and are available for travellers, like the dak-bungalows of India, with the advantage over these latter, however, that there is not even the necessity, as in India, either to carry one's own bedding or to be accompanied by one's own servants. For such establishments they are fitted out in an unusually comfortable style, the rooms being large, airy and as cool as possible; fitted, too, with western baths, 'showers' and other conveniences, such as one seldom finds in any other country in the East and, indeed, very seldom in most parts of Europe. They are managed by Frenchmen or by natives under the control of the local Government representatives; prices are moderate, and the service is very good.

It might be imagined that long straight sections of road, well made and well served with more or less up-to-date conveniences of travel, would tend alike to disfigure the country-side and to make motoring a monotony. The actuality is quite the contrary. Perhaps owing to the constantly changing scenery, or to the wonder of tropical vegetation, interest in the country-side was never lacking. Long stretches of the road are lined with flamboyant trees, and, with these in full bloom, as they were when we passed through, the effect is one of extreme beauty—the extraordinary contrast, in particular, between the varying greens of the luxuriant vegetation and the vivid scarlet of the flamboyants' flowers.

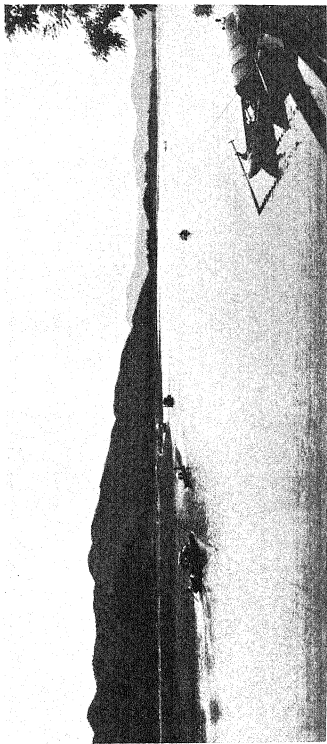
It may be that one can achieve this variety and obviate monotony to-day through the speed of motor-travelling, as one could never have done in older days when traffic was coolie-borne, when even the greatest of the land were carried only in litters at a pace frequently regulated by an equipage of elephants. Even to-day the driver of a slow-moving bullock-cart may find long stretches of embankment across widespreading *padi* fields monotonous in the crossing; but, except perhaps for a somewhat tedious stretch of such rice-fields between Saigon and Phnom-Penh, that is, across the flats flooded by the Mekong, we found

that, in our ordinary journeying, there was a constant changing of vegetation and scenery.

It would be difficult to substantiate any charge of monotony of road in the face of what is perhaps one of the most distinctive features of travelling in Indo-China—the enormous number of rivers, large and small, that have to be crossed in motoring through the country.

These may be crossed by ordinary road-bridges, as we should expect to cross them; and of such there is nothing to be said except that all the wooden bridges are gradually being replaced by less picturesque but more reliable structures of reinforced concrete. But in many cases, where the road runs near the railway, the same bridge over the river is used for road traffic as well as for the railway. In some cases, as at Hanoi or Hué, the bridges are massive structures with a roadway bordering the railroad on either side. But, on bridges of less size and importance, the permanent way is actually used for ordinary road traffic, being boarded with a wooden flooring raised to the top of the rails. On these the traffic over the bridge is carefully regulated at both ends on the same principle as at ordinary level-crossings at home. It is the third type of river-crossing, however, that is so unique a feature of travel on the Mandarin Road, that by ferry or *bac* as it is known to the French and their 'protégés'.

In many cases the *bac* is being replaced, like the old wooden bridge, by a bridge of reinforced concrete, which, again, is certainly a less picturesque, if more expeditious, method of transit. But the ferry is still maintained at places where bridges have not yet been constructed, or where the physical conditions are such as to preclude the possibility of a bridge; and these points are very numerous, so numerous that some travellers base their charge of monotony on the recurrence of the *bac*. In truth, it rather offers the motorist something of a welcome change, and it usually presents an interesting picture of native life and local colour. These ferries are exceedingly well organised, with the result that there is very little waste of time before one is across the river and off again on the



A *bac* in Annam : the "Two-seater" meeting a native auto-bus in mid-stream.



other side. The type of ferry used is the ordinary pontoon, open at both ends in order that vehicles can drive on to it on the one bank, and leave it again on the further bank without having to reverse or manœuvre into position. One can run right on to and off it over a ramp, while the ferry is securely clamped to the banks. Delays were very unusual. In Annam one had to negotiate estuaries rather than rivers proper, and the transport of the two cars would sometimes take more than an hour, as at the Bac de Ngoc Giap a few miles south of Thanh-hoa, and again to the south of Dong-Hoi. The former was really a rough journey. The estuary was wide, with flat low-lying banks. From the low hills up the river we could see a storm of thunder and rain advancing down the valley towards us. The storm made the natives want to put both cars on the one *bac*, and induced us to refuse sanction of so heavy a load. With four men poling and two steering the passage was safely accomplished, in two journeys, despite storm and rain; and we left behind yet one more *bac*, with feelings of relief mingled with memories of hills misty in their grey and mauve against the background of a stormy sky.

But our longest time on an ordinary ferry was at the Bac de Song Da-Rang, about half-way between Quin'hon and Nha-Trang in southern Annam. We arrived to find a very wide sandy river-bed, with a bamboo track over part of it, then a wide shallow river—and no ferry! The *bac* went up-stream for a long way, and we had twenty minutes to wait, which incidentally we whiled away in watching the amusing efforts of natives trying to load ponies into a canoe, and a native lady washing her clothes. In time the *bac* arrived—a very large flat-bottomed boat, on which, for the first time in our ferrying experience, we loaded both cars together. The natives waded up-stream, pulling and pushing the boat, first up one side and then gradually across and up the other. That ferry, with only the one crossing, occupied an hour and forty minutes.

These river-estuaries of Annam are too wide—some over a mile—or too subject to tides to warrant the building of any road-bridge at an economic cost. But in the ordinary

way one has very little delay before embarkation, as there are relays of pontoons at all the larger ferries. Further south and west, in traversing Cambodia, the river-crossings are either by road-bridge or ferry, as Cambodia has no railways, and therefore no rail-bridges available for road traffic as elsewhere in Indo-China. At the same time the great rivers of the Mekong and its affluent the Tonlé Sap provide the strongest currents that one has to negotiate. The ferries on these have to be worked by steam or motor-driven vessels. Normally, the cars are driven on to a pontoon-floated platform, towed across the river by a launch; but in one case the current is so strong and dangerous that a large motor lighter is used as the ferry, on which three or four cars can be driven at once. Just before entering Cambodia we had to cross the *bac* of Go Dau Ha, a short ferry, but with a variety of its own. A big iron bridge is under construction; but at present there are two types of ferry. One is the *Bac pour tous véhicules*—a heavy pontoon on an endless chain; the other, the *Bac pour autos de Tourisme*—a platform built over two sampans making a wide raft. Utilising both, the cars indulged in the amusement of a race across the stream!

To appreciate the number of river-crossings, and especially the frequency of the ferry, one needs really to study the large-scale motor-road maps of French Indo-China; and even then one cannot realise the startling suddenness with which one rounds a corner and drops down unexpectedly to one of these many *bacs*. Still, the excellence of the organisation remains the outstanding feature of the system; and one feels in duty bound to pay tribute to the courtesy and cheerful assistance of the ferrymen—in the main, lithe Annamites, whose appearance or rather size is so misleading an indication of their strength and virility.

The tariff of these ferries is regulated and—what is of value to the traveller—posted up on the spot. It needs no comment, but the mention of tariff suggests a further word on the general question of Customs, particularly as they affect the motorist.

The would-be traveller taking his own car must obviously make certain arrangements beforehand to overcome Customs difficulties. Owing to the kind support of the French Legation in Peking, we personally were welcomed by everyone in Indo-China with open arms. The Customs and Police Authorities waived all regulations in our favour, and the import of our two cars into Indo-China cost us exactly six cents, that is to say, the price of the two stamps necessary to legalise our documents. Normally, our cars would have been subject to a duty of one hundred and eighty per cent, as that is the tariff on foreign cars, the French very naturally wishing—as they are able—to protect their own industries against foreign competition by means of this very high tariff. It has good effects, as already explained. The motor trade in French Indo-China is a rapidly developing industry, as might well be expected in a country provided with such an excellent system of roads. As a result of the tariff practically all the automobiles in the country are of various French makes, and the distributors of these are concerned not only in the sale of new cars but in the subsequent maintenance of them in good running order—a vital feature of motor industry which has been emphasised in a previous chapter. Consequently, as well as having magnificent showrooms, the distributing firms of Saigon and Hanoi are equipped with the most up-to-date service-stations of the East.

But, to revert to the tariff, I am sure that, if the prospective traveller would first communicate with his Consular Authority in Indo-China, special and satisfactory arrangements, such as those by which we benefited, would be made on his behalf also. Certain travellers indulge diatribe against what they indicate as French bureaucracy run riot in her colonies to the discomfort of the traveller. But, in fact, many French officials and others interested in the development of the country assured us that they were only too keen to encourage travellers in the territories under their control. The official *Bureau de Tourisme* which you find in almost every place of any size or importance confirms this attitude. Unfortunately,

one feels it necessary to add a 'caveat' that it is for us, when granted these special facilities, to see that, by our behaviour and strict adherence to the laws and regulations of the country we do not prejudice the chances of others obtaining the same privileges.

These observations relate to the ordinary traveller; and it is as well to explain that, although Indo-China is a delightful country and a paradise for travellers—and especially sportsmen—it hardly presents a good opening for any but French commercial enterprise. Protective customs tariffs have purposely been made so high as to make it practically impossible for any but French goods to be sold in Indo-China. This applies generally, and not in particular to the motoring industry, although its reactions on the latter were the most obvious to us, travelling as we were entirely by road. The results of the tariff were patent. Indo-China, for instance, is the one country in the world that I have so far encountered where the American car, pronouncedly predominant all over the rest of Asia, has been unable to penetrate, because of the tariff barrier. Even the 'super' business organisations of the United States are unable to establish a footing. Apart from actual cars, the French participate substantially in the distribution of petrol and other oils in Indo-China, even though they are not the actual owners of any great oil-fields. The few oil installations that have been established in the country are not just the usual branches of the great companies which elsewhere monopolise the oil trade, but are gallicised adaptations of those companies, which ensure that a large portion of the profits does not go to a foreign country.

It is not for travellers who have spent a bare month moving more or less rapidly through a country of such a size to pronounce 'ex cathedra' on questions of economic policy or colonial administration. Still less is it a motorist's province in what is professedly a chapter on the amenities of such travel in Indo-China. There is a wealth of literature, chiefly French, for those who are particularly interested in this sphere of French colonial development.

But France's problem is stated best perhaps by M. Roland Dorgelès, the novelist, in his fascinating book *Sur La Route Mandarine*.¹ It presents vivid pictures of the varied aspects of life and scenery in French Indo-China, and in particular of the potentialities for good or ill of the sudden superimposition of the most Western discoveries upon the age-old and frequently primitive customs of the East. In a chapter entitled *Sous le signe de la piastre* that is certainly provocative of serious thought, M. Dorgelès especially discusses the economic situation and would seem to suggest that the wealth of Indo-China is filling the pockets of French plutocrats and profiteers at the expense of the countries of France and Indo-China themselves.

But we must follow *La Route Mandarine* as we saw it, with an expression of gratitude, in conclusion of this chapter, to all those who rendered us the unfailing assistance that we received wherever we went. Our thanks in this regard are due to the French Minister in Peking and to his Military Attaché, Commandant Roque, and particularly to His Excellency the Governor-General of Indo-China and all his subordinates, both French and native; to many other Frenchmen also for their constant courtesy and hospitality.

¹ Published by Albin Michel, Paris, 1925. An English translation under the title of *On the Mandarin Road* was published in 1926 by the Century Co. of New York and London.



CHAPTER VI

THE 'RED' LANDS OF TONGKING

Itinerary: Dong-dang, Langson, Bac Ninh, Hanoi, Ninh Binh, Annam Frontier.

UNTIL quite recently Indo-China was practically an unknown country to the average man in the street; and it is questionable whether even to-day much is known about it by other than those who have direct dealings with it. And if this criticism be true of the average citizen of France, who officially 'protects' the country, it applies with far greater force to the English-reading public. Your Frenchman has now available a fair library of comparatively recent literature on the subject, if he chooses to make use of it. Your Englishman has the same library, of course; but the man in the street, of whom one is speaking, is not naturally drawn to acquire information through a foreign medium on a country that is not otherwise brought very much to his notice. There is, I believe, no English literature specifically on Indo-China, save a few books of travel experience—and most of these few written by Americans or translated from the French—a brief handbook¹ issued under the direction of the Foreign Office for the benefit of British delegates to the World War Peace Conference, who might be required to have some knowledge of a possible subject of discussion, and sundry encyclopaedic articles, notably those of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*.² Having plunged momentarily into bibliography, it is only fair that one should mention another English book, *On*

¹ Published by H.M. Stationery Office, London, 1920.

² Thirteenth edition, 1926.

and Off Duty in Annam,¹ written by Madame Gabrielle de Vassal, who has been lecturing on it only recently to the Geographical Society. Unfortunately, her delightful book relates, except incidentally, only to Annam; but, having gone to live there with her husband, a French doctor, attached to the Pasteur Institute at Nha-Trang—she herself is English—she gives vivid and intimate pictures of the native life of twenty years ago.

This bibliographic note is, in effect, an 'apologia pro libro meo' or at least an apology for the following chapters on Indo-China, which may seem parloously didactic in the nature of the information—historical, political, geographical and other—that they gratuitously impart. But, from our own previous ignorance, apparently shared by those to whom we talk on the subject, it seems impossible to write intelligibly on this section of the journey without imparting such information; and it may at least be of interest to those who admit that ignorance.

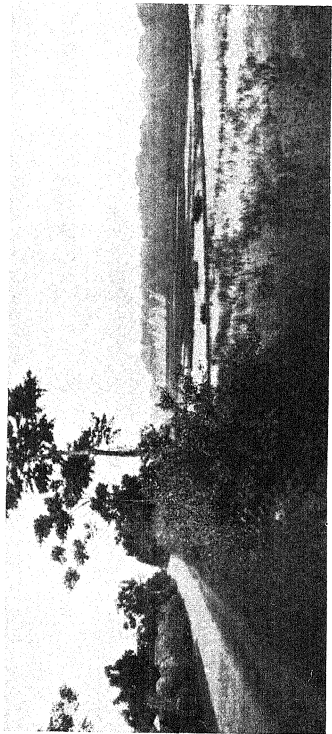
To prevent misunderstanding at the outset, the term Indo-China must be taken to mean that country which is bounded by Siam on the south-west, Burma on the west, China on the north, the Gulf of Tongking and the China Sea on the east, and again the China Sea on the south. Some refer to this territory as French Indo-China, looking upon the whole of this great peninsula of south-eastern Asia as Indo-China. But, whichever of the two is right, the country which we are to call Indo-China—for brevity's sake, if for no other reason—is that part of the peninsula under the control of the French, comprising five different states: Tongking, Annam, Cochin-China and Cambodia—to follow *La Route Mandarine*—and, in the mountainous hinterland, Laos.

Tongking, the most northerly of these states, is a Protectorate administered directly by the French authorities. The country as a whole consists of a large plain forming the basin of a number of rivers, in particular the Song-Koi or Red River, on which Hanoi, the capital, and its port, Haiphong, are situated.

¹ William Heinemann, London, 1910.

The greater part of this plain is devoted to rice-growing, which is the staple industry of the country. An air photograph gives a picture of a vast flat very largely under water; and for long stretches the roads run on a raised 'bund' with flooded *padi* fields on either hand. The road from Haiphong to Do Son, the seaside resort of the northern capital, gives as good an impression as any of this type of land. As we returned on this road across the rice-fields during a wonderful sunset, far from monotonous, the flooded land reflected a riot of colour, all the tints of sky and cloud and palm—and every detail that was there to reflect. As you cross them by day, they are a constant scene of labour; for the teeming population of Tongking has to wring subsistence from these flooded lands, ploughed by the ubiquitous buffalo, the native harrowing with what appears to be a mere wooden bar; while the planting out of shoots is peculiarly the women's work. Men or women, they stand in the water with the inevitable trousers tucked well up, and protected from the sun by the woven headgear that is so distinctive a feature of their garb. In Tongking—unlike Annam—this is further distinctive of sex. For the men wear the pointed umbrella-hat—'cone-shaped' might describe it better—while the woman wears a flat-topped, circular hat, more like a large inverted tray than anything; even the scarecrows are dressed to the part, with umbrella-hat complete. Tunic and trousers, unlike the unvarying blue of farther south, are of a reddish brown in keeping with the mud-lands of their labour—a reddish brown that degenerates to drab, when agricultural troubles drive them much against their will to the hated coalfields of Hon-gai, eastward of Haiphong. In towns, like Hanoi—be it said—the native is spruce in black tunic and white trousers, with neat black turban binding coiled hair.

The irrigation of these fields is dependent on the waters brought down by the network of rivers after the seasonal rains. Sometimes the flood is disastrous, and much of the natives' time and energy is spent in a proper distribution of the waters. For apart from the raised 'bund' of the roadway, you will see line after line of embankment,



Padi fields in Tongking.



often only a few inches above the flat, separating individual fields or plots. And here natives are busy adjusting the water-level by basket irrigation. Sometimes the so-called basket is an old petrol-can pierced with holes at the top, to which is attached a rope manipulated by a couple of men, their alternate pulling skilfully and rhythmically slinging the water from the lower to the higher level. Elsewhere a lone native is ladling the water laboriously from one pool to another with a long-handled implement reminiscent of the old-fashioned collecting plate that one used to see in country churches. By way of more elaborate operations, we saw irrigation water-wheels, with their chain of buckets absorbing the rivers of the country from Dong-dang in the far north of Tongking to Siemreap amid Cambodian forest lands—just such wheels as one sees in Syrian Hama—while others were operated by natives who seemed to be working a treadmill.

The rivers themselves were picturesque with native life, and, running alongside or crossing them, we saw much of this aspect of native industry. For fishing is a staple occupation; the rivers must have a good supply, to judge by the amount of craft; and fish are caught, one is told, in the flooded rice fields themselves. In the wider estuaries the nets are laid and left, to be hauled in periodically by winches from the shore. I remember a river near Phu Ly in southern Tongking which was a maze of rafts, with the nets strung from them on poles; and often you will find your Annamite living on his sampan *en famille*. These slight boats are little more than canoes and far smaller than the more familiar junk that may attain three-masted dignity. But, slight as they are, they house quite a big family, sheltered from the sun beneath the matting that covers its greater length. Add to this a basket-projection for chickens, and the inevitable poles for raising and lowering the net of potential wealth—and the fishing family's equipage is complete, with which they seem 'to live and move', if possible, 'and have their being' day in, night out.

Along the roads, dyked or other, you will pass natives

busier than these slow-living fisher-folk—hurrying marketwards, probably, if they are women, with their burdens balancing from a pole slung on their shoulder, a baby perhaps in one of the pans, to counteract the rest of the load. If marketing, they are on their way both to sell and to buy in the village. This, in Tongking, has normally quite a definite enclosure, probably a hedge of bamboo. Big groups of bamboos and other trees, too, enshrine altars and temples, half hidden in the villages or conspicuous on raised mounds over stretches of flat. In this connexion the word *pagode* is reserved for a Buddhist sanctuary, while *tour* seems to do duty for what we would term a 'pagoda', and *temple* in these parts signifies a building devoted, under the locally prevalent Animism, as the dwelling of any of the countless spirits or divinities which are the objects of such worship. It is difficult to differentiate, for native religion seems a strange conglomeration of cults—Buddhism externally superimposed on the cruder Animism or spirit-worship that has a greater appeal to the native intelligence, if his worship can be called intelligent; but, above all, ancestor-worship, which has been the predominant cult of every home, village and state since the Chinese overran Tongking and Annam long centuries ago and bequeathed their legacy of language and Confucianism, and, with the latter, its most distinctive feature of ancestral rites.

A digression has brought us to China. The actual road which we followed from Hanoi to La Porte de Chine and subsequently retraced, took us through hilly country very different from the Tongking we have been describing. For Tongking is not all delta-land. Northward, the plain is divided from China by a mountainous zone some forty miles wide through which the French have built roads and railways to the frontier. There are two main lines of penetration, the one—which we took—striking north across the fringe of the mountainous belt via Langson, the other running north-west to Lao-Kay along the mountainous course of the Red River, which leaves China at that point. These lines of penetration are worth attention, for



In a Tongkingese village.



they are very definitely the lines of penetration which the French followed in their earliest efforts of sixty years since, and which they have achieved only with tears and blood. The story of their establishment in the north of Indo-China is an epic of adventure little known outside France and the country of its setting, a story of individual effort and enterprise ill-supported, of frequent failures and dire disasters, of eventual triumph, although the policy of perseverance and penetration on one occasion caused the fall of a French ministry.

It was in 1869 that the French were first attracted to Tongking by the hope of participating in the development of the mineral fields in the Chinese province of Yunnan and the upper Mekong valley. Owing to the Franco-Prussian War, however, it was not until 1872 that French interest in Tongking was revived. Dupuis, a trader, was by then trying to penetrate into Yunnan, negotiating a passage up the Red River in order to take stores to the Chinese, who were occupied with disturbances consequent on the disbandment of the T'ai-p'ing rebels. At the same time a French officer was sent officially from Saigon, the capital of the French colony already established in Cochin-China, to open up the Red River to French commerce. Both the military official and the unofficial trader were denied entry by the Tonkingese, and, after an ineffectual attempt on the part of Dupuis to force his way up the river, he was asked to leave the country. He refused. François Garnier, the famous explorer—he was in fact a naval officer—whose exploratory work up the Mekong had first aroused French interest in the potentialities of Tongking, was then sent to Hanoi to investigate matters; but, as a result of his inquiries, he took the side of Dupuis and strongly supported his scheme of penetration. The Tongkingese refused to treat with Garnier until the question of Dupuis had been settled; and on this refusal Garnier decided to resort to arms. In 1873 he stormed and captured Hanoi citadel, asked for reinforcements from Saigon, and

captured Hai-duong and other towns of importance around Hanoi. At this the Tongkingese, finding that they could not eject the French from Hanoi with their own forces, called in Lu-Vinh-Phuoc, the leader of the 'Black Flags'. These were Chinese rebels who, after the T'ai-p'ing rebellion, escaped into the mountainous regions of southern China and northern Tongking, and were the terror of the population of the whole country-side. In due course the 'Black Flags' marched on Hanoi, burning villages as they came. To relieve the situation Garnier attempted a sortie by the garrison of the city; but in the ensuing engagement he was killed.

This, in effect, was the close of the first chapter of French effort in Tongking. For Dupré, the Governor of Saigon, alarmed at the news of the rebuff, sent a representative, Philastre, to apologise to Annam. Much of the literature of the episode treats the pacifism of Philastre as a wanton betrayal of French blood. It remains that by the Treaty and Commercial Convention of 1874, the French were to withdraw from the interior of Tongking, but were to be allowed to trade up the Red River at Hanoi and Haiphong and also at Qui-n'hon, an Annamite port to the south of Tourane, where they already had had a footing for nearly a hundred years. Annam, on her side, was to conform to French external policy and to recognise officially the French occupation of Cochin-China, which, as we shall see on reaching that part of the journey, had been effected in the course of the preceding decade. France, too, was to recognise the sovereignty of Annam *vis-à-vis* all foreign powers.

It will be noticed that Annam speaks for Tongking, which had been for seventy years at least quite definitely a part of the Annamite Empire—since the days of Gia-long, of whom we shall hear again. This was a fact which the French in these earlier years failed to realise; or, rather, they seem to have conceived of the Tongkingese as an oppressed race unwillingly subject to the domination of alien Annam. As this apparent misconception serves to explain the subsequent chapters of French intervention in Tong-

king, a digression on Annamite history of far earlier date may be permitted.

Already 'Annamite' has occurred synonymously with 'Tongkingese', unless the account has taken refuge under the vaguer phrase 'native', in descriptions of journeying in Tongking. The reason is, of course, that ninety per cent of the population of Tongking is Annamite. In fact it is probably true that the Annamite of Tongking is the truest Annamite, the race more and more losing its characteristics as it goes south, through the strong intermixture in the course of centuries of the races with whom it made contact—aboriginal tribes, Malaysian invaders and others. In travelling in Tongking one is struck by the resemblance between its inhabitants and those of South China, both in physical features and in their manners and customs.

To-day, of course, there is a big difference. France may well congratulate herself on the cheerful air of peace and happiness in which the peasants of Tongking seemed to go about their daily life in strong contrast to the misery, ruin and desolation which we saw in China, resulting from the chaos that existed in that unhappy country alike when we were in it and when we left it. There, for years past, the country-folk have been oppressed by civil war. We were accustomed, for instance, during our stay in China to see the land under intermittent cultivation by peasants whose anxious faces reflected only too clearly the constant strain of effort to evade the recruiting detachments of so many armies, or to escape in other ways the fighting forces of those armies, as they laid waste the country-side from time to time. The unfortunate Chinese peasant, deprived of most of his crops, and taxed over and over again for the same year, can scarcely be blamed for his depressed outlook on life as he found it. In Indo-China, on the other hand, the Tongkingese and Annamites were singing or whistling to themselves as they worked in their *padi* fields in the full assurance of established peace, and the tranquillity of an ordered and well-governed State.

Villages were full of seemingly happy men, women and children, laughing and chattering as they discussed their crops or their families or their luck in the fishing sampans. Altogether it was abundantly evident that we had left behind the chaos and hell of China for what appeared to be the happy and contented realm of tropical Indo-China.

But, that difference apart, there remain the resemblances that one notices. This does not mean that one dubs the Tongkingese as Chinese. The truth lies in the claim of the Annamite that he is descended from a Mongoloid race, the 'Giao-Chi', who were in occupation of the southern provinces of China, of Tongking and northern Annam as long ago as three thousand years before the Christian era. Legend tells of a Chinese prince sent to rule over these hordes, whom the Chinese significantly describe as 'foreign devils'—the Chinese equivalent of the Greek 'barbarian' to describe anyone who was not actually of their own race. The name of 'Giao-Chi' means, incidentally, 'separated big-toe'; and it is interesting that a peculiar ability to manipulate the big toe is in fact a feature of the Annamite of to-day.

Behind the legend there is probably a basis of fact—the coming of a wave of Mongolian invasion, from Tibet perhaps, more southerly than that which overran what eventually became the Celestial Empire.

Chinese domination becomes a fact of historical, as distinct from legendary, record by the close of the third century B.C., and at the quite definite date of 111 B.C. you have the well-known Han dynasty of South China masters of northern Indo-China. But by that period there has occurred a most interesting cleavage of the Giao-Chi—a cleavage between the hill and the plain that is a most noticeable feature of Annamite history and of Annamite life to-day. It was in all probability this cleavage that enabled the Chinese to achieve their mastery. The hillmen are the Tai of history. You find traces of them in the Muong of north-west Tongking; they include the Laotians of the mountainous hinterland, which unfortunately we had not the time to explore; but we shall hear of

them again in connection with Cambodia and find them later the predominant race of what we know as Siam. The men of the plains and deltaic lands, on the other hand, included the Annamites of Tongking and northern Annam, whom Chinese held subject till A.D. 968 except for a brief period of heroic rebellion under two Tongkingese sisters, curiously reminiscent of our British Boadicea, both in character and almost exactly in time.

In A.D. 968, then, the first native Annamite dynasty was established, and, except for a few years at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Annamite has been virtually free from Chinese domination, although he has sought her aid and acknowledged a nominal suzerainty as and when expediency prompted. The point of importance is that, until the establishment of the present dynasty in 1802, the capital of the Annamite dynasties has been almost invariably at Hanoi in Tongking—not, of course, the actual city of to-day, which is strikingly modern. It is of interest, perhaps, that Hanoi's lake figures in the final liberation of 1428, since, according to the legend, it was the genii of that lake who gave Lê-Soi, a humble fisherman of Tongking, the magic sword with which he headed the Annamite rebellion against the Chinese persecutions of a brief but bitter twenty years.

The further cleavage that resulted in the distinction between Annam and Tongking as we know them to-day shows itself a century later. For although Lê-Soi's dynasty were the nominal rulers, the real power was by then in the hands of two families, more powerful than the king's—an experience not unknown to French or English history. These were the Trinh of Tongking, and the Nguyen princes of Hué in Annam. Gia-long was one of these latter, and his union of Tongking, Annam and Cochin-China was in effect a reunion of the now far-spread members of the Annamite family. Still, it should have emerged from this digression into the long-past centuries that Tongking may well present the truest Annamite; and, with this thought, we return to the tale of French penetration to find that Hanoi, the site of the capital of age-old dynasties,

is significantly to-day, at the end of that penetration, the administrative capital of the whole of French Indo-China.

The eight years following the Treaty and Convention of 1874 were years of unsettledness. The French were supposed to be able to trade at various places, but they were prevented from doing so by Chinese bandits, who—the French alleged—were strongly supported by the Chinese Government. Accordingly in 1882, the Governor of Cochin-China despatched Henri de Rivière to open up the Red River once again. History repeated itself strangely. Like Garnier, he met with opposition and stormed Hanoi. Again the 'Black Flags' mustered and threatened Hanoi; de Rivière decided upon a sortie to strengthen his position; but he too, like Garnier, was killed in the ensuing engagement. It was a fatality of impetuosity, as even strong reinforcements under Admiral Courbet and General Bouet only just managed to hold Hanoi against the 'Black Flags'; and Bouet failed in his advance on Sontay, the next town of importance up the Red River. 1883 is a long story of delta towns lost and recovered; but Sontay remained the real centre of the struggle till its fall in the December, and even in its fall it was the cause of what became the bitterest chapter of French experience—their open war with China.

Officially, France had already made in August an 'amicable' settlement with Annam, who definitely agreed—Hué having been stormed—to recognise the French Protectorate of Tongking. It was as 'Protector' of Tongking that France advanced again on Sontay to rescue their 'protégés' from Chinese bandits. But three years earlier, Tu'-du'c, the Annamite Emperor, had, during the period of nominal peace, sent a special embassy to the court of Peking, professing the loyal obedience of an ancient tributary. Tu'-du'c had since died, but France may not have been surprised to find that the garrison of Sontay was in part Chinese; it is surely a suzerain's duty to protect a loyal and ancient tributary against rebel bandits.

The opening of 1884, therefore, found France mistress of the delta, but fighting Chinese regulars. By May, however, Li Hung Chang, whom we have already met much farther north in a previous chapter, had agreed to the 'immediate' evacuation of Tongking by Chinese troops. The French, however, sent Colonel Dugenne so 'immediately' to occupy Langson in accordance with this agreement that a local Chinese commander professed that he had no instructions to evacuate; and this misunderstanding resulted in a fresh outbreak of hostilities. The French expedition was badly carried out and involved them not only in losses due to mal-organisation but in the disaster of a rout at the hands of the Chinese at Bac-le, some twenty-five miles from Langson. But revenge was not long in coming, as, a few months later, the Chinese in their turn suffered a severe defeat at the hands of the French, and by February 1885 Langson was in the latter's hands. Revenge may have been sweet, but it was short. A month later the French suffered another rout—the disaster of Langson, which, magnified perhaps by political machination at home, brought about the fall of Jules Ferry, the Republican Premier of France. He had been mainly responsible for France's policy in the penetration of Tongking, and, in spite of his fall, it was he who was responsible for the negotiation of the Treaty of Tientsin, which, only three months later, brought these hostilities to an end. His policy had triumphed, for the Treaty recognised France's Protectorate, both of Annam and of Tongking, China getting Formosa and the Pescadores as the fruits of a war in which she had shown herself quite a formidable enemy.

These may not have been very big engagements; the routs may not have been as serious as Ferry's anti-war opponents suggested; but any disaster to Western troops, few amid so many enemies and on so distant a field, has in it the elements of panic. It is not surprising that Frenchmen of forty years later, though now firmly established at Hanoi, still talk in respectful tones of Langson.

The difficulties of the French were not yet over. For

another seven years, victorious France, under the influence of militarist agents, seems to have interpreted her 'Protectorate' in Tongking as nothing else than an opportunity for conquest and annexation. In the year of the Treaty of Tientsin the Tongkingese were already in revolt, although they had never rebelled against Annam, from whom France was now professing to protect them. Paul Bert, the Résident-Général of Tongking, professed himself unable to restrain the military and naval 'imperialists'. They occupied Hué citadel, and, although the consequent rebellion in Annam was suppressed, there were six years of a tedious and costly guerilla warfare with the rebels of Tongking, abetted once again by the 'Black Flags'.

It was not until 1891 that, following the wise transference of the control of French colonies¹ from the Ministry of 'Marines' to the Ministry of Commerce, the appointment of the enlightened M. de Lanessan as Governor-General with full powers brought a speedy end to the chaos of the north and gave France her united, peaceful and prosperous possession of Indo-China. The previous policy of force was abandoned for one of co-operation with the natives. The Annamite Empire was recognised as a Native State to be administered by the Annamites themselves, supported by a French Adviser. Working with the *comat*, the council of native ministers, and issuing proclamations under the 'Great Royal Seal' of the Emperor, France accomplished in a few weeks what she had failed to achieve alone by years of warfare and at heavy cost. Soon, only the 'Black Flags' were in arms; and now Annamite Mandarins were united with French officialdom for their destruction.

By 1898 the political and financial unity of Indo-China was finally established as a direct result of this complete change of policy of government. To-day Hanoi, the scene of so much effort, is the administrative capital of this political unit, comprising the Protectorates of Tongking, Annam, Cambodia and Laos, each under a *résident supérieur*, and the colony of Cochin-China under a

¹ Subsequently transferred, in 1894, to the Ministry of the Colonies.

Governor. The whole unit is under the supreme administration of the Governor-General of Indo-China, Annam and Cambodia still maintaining native rulers under their ancient titles of Emperor and King.

To-day brings us back to Hanoi, and Hanoi is French. There is a native city, with its streets named after industries, as in Peking. There is a holy lake. But, for all its holy lake of old legend, it is an impression of the modern Hanoi that one carries away, a town French to look at, with its wide boulevards and gardens, the imposing residence of the Governor-General—symbol of French authority—its opera-house and cafés, the replica of a French town; and, if you are still in doubt, there is the ultra-modern bridge that brings you into Hanoi from the port of Haiphong.

We happened on an interesting instance of modernism at Langson, where we chanced to spend the night of the fourteenth of July, France's *Jour de l'Indépendance*. Here were the Tongkingese celebrating the triumph of the French Revolution with the native customs of their own *Tet* or New Year festival—notably the 'dragon' procession, in which the heads of a human file support a writhing form culminating in the 'monster's' flaming lantern-head. Less picturesque but perhaps of greater import was the open-air cinematograph exhibiting, for the benefit of the native, truly patriotic pictures to the glory of *la Patrie protectrice*.

It was a strange admixture; and one is struck with that same admixture in the population of Hanoi. Many of the natives talk French or are most anxious to profess it—a very pidgin French, admittedly. There are a surprising number of Frenchmen—traders, to a certain extent, but, Hanoi being what it is, mainly officials, amongst whom I found many friends of my Syrian days. These Frenchmen know their country of adoption; they have learnt its language—and there are languages unlearned in other colonies easier than Annamite, even if that mean only

quoc-ngu, the native language transliterated in western alphabet.

Finally, to show that Hanoi is really up-to-date, we revert to motoring, the young Frenchman being an enthusiastic motorist. He careers along Hanoi boulevards with sports-body and open exhaust to the admiration and envy of his young friends in the cafés as they sip their *apéritif* in the languid hour before dinner. We found him thoroughly interested in our attempt to reach Paris overland; it was a ploy after his own heart, and a sympathetic Press made much of our enterprise. I am afraid that our failure to reach Burma and India overland via Siam disappointed them; and a subsequent and rival French effort was no more successful in that respect than we were.

CHAPTER VII

DOWN THE COAST OF ANNAM

Itinerary: Thanh-hoa, Vinh, Dong-Hoi, Quang-tri, Hué, Tourane, Quang-ngai, Binh-Dinh, Qui-n'hon, Nha-Trang.

THE itinerary represents a week's running over a distance of something more than eight hundred miles, the week including, however, a stoppage of forty-six hours in the capital, Hué. Against that delay one may set the first day's run of one hundred and ninety-one miles, bringing us actually from Hanoi across the border to Vinh, our station for the night, which we reached at 7.50 P.M., with the last hour's run in the dark. We were truly tired, for we had started at 8 o'clock, and had travelled all through the heat of the day. There is a fair strain in covering in tropical heat long stretches of unknown ground, even if the going be good—and ours was. On the whole, perhaps because of previous delays of so many kinds, we came through Annam rather more quickly than we should otherwise have done, and forbore to make detours that would have given us a more intimate impression of native life, especially in the interior, or a more detailed knowledge of the wealth of archaeological and historical remains with which Annam abounds.

An early start was typical of our journeying day. Indeed, seven o'clock was more normal, and we sometimes achieved six o'clock. Such a start gave one a good, long run in the coolest part of the day, although, in fact, as we always travelled with the hoods up as a protection against the sun, we found that we were able to motor through the hottest part of the day without serious inconvenience. Towns, of course, like Haiphong and Hanoi and others

to the south, we found very hot; but against that one has to set the comparative cool of Langson, which is two thousand feet above sea-level, and of the various other heights—passes innumerable—that we had to negotiate as we followed the coastal road where the highlands send frequent spurs to the shore. Before leaving Annam, we were even to be glad to wear ordinary European winter-clothing, both during the day-time and at night, in the uplands of Dalat, five thousand feet high.

The morning run would end with a noontide lunch in a town or village, or alfresco by the road-side. The point was to find shade for it. For instance, there was a hut near Langson that looked promising for lunch; but, as a snake dropped almost on our heads in exploring its possibilities, we decided that we preferred the open, with its additional attraction of a beautiful view of wooded mountain ranges across a wide valley.

It was after just such a lunch under shady road-side trees on the Col de Dong Giao, that we came upon the frontier of Annam. Along an extraordinarily pretty road, picturesque with a small temple under its inevitable tree—banyan, this time—we followed a valley of small bush-covered rocks, pierced with holes and caves, to find ourselves passing through a natural barrier of rock, with a lovely panorama of grass and hills ahead, the near hills covered with a thick jungle, a medley of bigger trees and smaller flowering shrubs. A few miles later came the Annamite *poste*, with official investigation of Mai, our native servant, in the matter of his vaccination papers. French officialdom is efficiently strict in its attempt to control cholera and other plagues. At Ro-On bridge, to the south of Vinh, an official was so anxious not to omit his examination that he presented himself in pyjamas.

This apart, there was little to tell us that we had passed into Annam, for this northern section from Thanh-hoa to Vinh is physically very much like that of southern Tongking. There is still swampy plain and *padi* field, although there is frequent change to bush country, much like that of Gambia, and the areca palm is more and more

in evidence. This latter is pre-eminently the tree of Tongking and Annam, and the reason is not far to seek—the ‘betel’ habit, which deserves more than a passing word.

This form of chewing is perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of the Annamite, of exalted and humblest station alike. The planting of areca palm and betel vine to celebrate the birth of an Annamite child is not a meaningless rite but a virtual necessity—to ensure the supply that his or her habit will exact in years to come. We talk, even in our dictionaries, of the betel-nut; but it is the areca that gives the nut. Quids of this nut, wrapped in a leaf of the betel and coated with lime—to give full flavour—furnish the chewing equipment of ‘the Son of Heaven’ or the humblest *nha que*, the Emperor, that is, or the peasant. The betel-box is even set out for the Imperial dead. Its internal effects I cannot tell; presumably, they are pleasing. But, externally, these well-chewed quids result in lips swollen and blood-red from the juice; and the lips are not its final barrier. In this crimson setting picture two black rows of teeth; and you have the Annamite idea of facial beauty. They scorn to have the ‘teeth of a dog’, and in consequence they lacquer their own—a trying performance, and it also loosens the teeth. What sacrifices will love not make? And the Annamite is not considered ripe for love until the teeth are black. As for the loosening, *nuoc mam*, the staple native seasoning of fish sauce, which we liked best at the farthest distance, seems to counteract the lacquer solvent. The black cavity does not appeal to the Westerner; in fact, I believe, the native *congaie*, who hopes to engage the affections of a Frenchman, leaves her teeth unlacquered and therewith incidentally puts herself without the pale of native love. After all, it is a matter of custom; and, apart from the lacquering, chewing seems to have some good points. In the case of the Annamite it certainly acts as a reliable antiseptic, and many of our own dentists are advising it, even if they do not prescribe the crimson medium of Annam.

'Crimson' recalls one other feature of female beauty in Annam, which only serves to illustrate once again the curious dictates of custom and fashion. Unlike the Chinese, whom they took for model in so much else, the Annamite women pride themselves on showing a bare red heel. They go barefoot for the most part on their tasks; and they are usually working. Perhaps that practical ability counts more with the male than the outward show. But crimson lips and lacquered teeth, red heels and lithe labour all considered, their main object is to find the mother of the son who will, in time to come, carry on ancestral rites and tend his father's spirit-tablet that he may rest in peace.

If you wish, you can see, as you pass, something of the family life to which this allusion has brought us, and certainly you can see its setting. The peasant's house is open by day with the family altar conspicuous and, apart from that, little more than a raised flooring, which serves as bed at night and as table or shop-counter by day. Mats will be strewn on this for bedding at night, but one does not see the housing-problems at night, for the boarding that has been raised on poles throughout the day is dropped, and the Annamite enjoys until the dawn the privacy of home.

To return to the road. Thirty miles from the frontier, it brought us to Thanh-hoa, a small town typical of French influence, with its well-paved streets, lit by electricity, and its great match factory hard by the native workshops still producing the pottery that is the local industry of much longer standing.

Another ninety miles of the country described and the road enters Vinh, which is the southern terminus of the already existing stretch of railway from Hanoi. Vinh is important from the point of view of communication in another direction. Two main roads of penetration have been laid from there into Laos—there are others somewhat farther south, from Ha-tinh and Dong-Hoi—and here we can best make a brief digression into the mountainous hinterland of Laos, still rather backward, but

gradually developing under the French, as their programme of road construction expands.

Already Laos has several hundred kilometres of first-class roads, and that to Thakkek on the Mekong provides a wonderful journey. It is not long since there was no road at all through those blue mountains that make now a close and now a receding background on one's right, as one comes down the Mandarin Road. Laos, then, could be reached only by a long and slow journey up the Mekong River, and remained therefore a country largely remote and isolated. Yet, this mountainous area, lying to the west of Tongking, and along the left bank of the Mekong westward of Annam and north of Cambodia, has seen kingdoms and principalities rise and fall through centuries past. The most powerful of these naturally lay along the course of the Mekong; and there the two capitals of chief importance still survive.

Of these, Vien-Tiane is now regarded as the administrative capital of the French Protectorate of Laos. The Laotians, however, seem to regard Luang-Prahbang as the true seat of government. This, the capital of the one-time kingdom of that name, succeeded in remaining at least nominally independent until fairly recent years, though Chinese and Annamite, and still more Khmer of Cambodia and Tai of Siam have tried, with varying success, to conquer Laos. Indeed, about one hundred years ago, the former of these kingdoms, with Vien-Tiane as its capital, fell to the Siamese, who, as Tais, were in a sense cousins of the Laotian. Luang-Prahbang, however, retained her independence; and so it came that in 1893, in order to save herself from a similar fate, the then King of Luang-Prahbang voluntarily put his country under the protection of the French, who by that time had achieved more or less effective protectorates over Tongking and Annam.

It would appear to-day that the natives of Laos look to the French not only to reunite upper and lower Laos into one kingdom, but also to recover from Siam those

provinces lying on the right bank of the Mekong River which originally belonged to the old kingdom of Vien-Tiane. Much of the country, of course, remains undeveloped, especially the wild areas inhabited by aboriginal tribes whom the Laotians themselves class as *khas* or savages; but it is, perhaps, the region of Indo-China that is most interesting in its potentiality for future development, if we think of Laos in its north-western corner as the meeting-ground of China, Indo-China, Burma and Siam; if we think of the French successfully penetrating from the east, as the Annamite, with his love of the plain, has never successfully penetrated; and finally, if we realise the desire of the French to find a route westward that will strike the railway system of Siam farther north than Aranya.

It may be that aviation will help to solve the difficulties of the future; and with that thought we return to Vinh, for there, as in all the towns of any size in Indo-China, the French have already set up spacious landing-grounds for their aviation service.

At Vinh one leaves the wider belt of Annam, that northern area that was, with Tongking, the old home of the Giao-Chi under Chinese domination, and then for five centuries from A.D. 1000 the real centre of Annamite dynastic rule. The strip of plain to which Annam now narrows was until the close of the fifteenth century occupied and controlled by the people known as Chams. We saw their traces southward down the coast to Hué, particularly at Quang-tri; but, as Hué is pre-eminently Annamite from more recent associations, and as the chief strongholds of Cham rule lay south of it, we shall make straight for Hué and leave consideration of the Chams till later.

With the narrowing of the belt, we also kept on the whole more closely to the sea, encountering more *cols* and, between them, the ferries that crossed the wide estuaries already described. Sometimes the road ran along the sea, or, leaving it a little, we would have the new feature of

sand-dunes on our left—sand-dunes extraordinarily white—or again low hills over ground reminiscent of Aberdeenshire, and always to the right, hills, jungle-covered hills. The finest of these earlier passes was that between Ha-tinh and Dong-Hoi, known as the Col de la Porte d'Annam, where, after climbing a road, steep and narrow with sharp turns and hair-pin bends, we were rewarded with a glorious panorama of sea and big hills, with the sand as white to look upon as the wind was hot to feel.

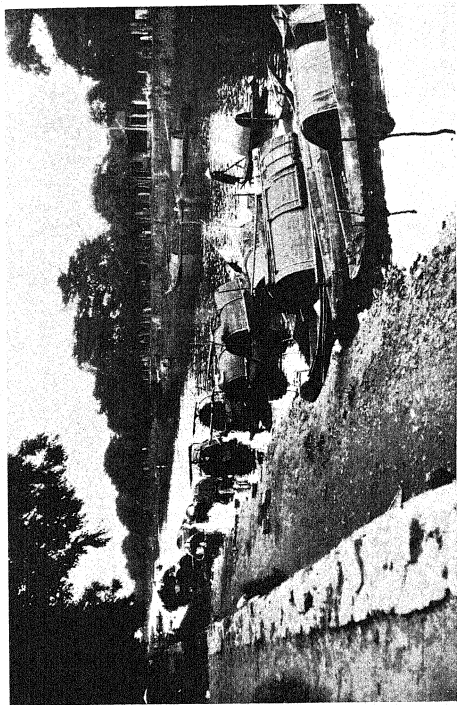
And so to rest in the old walled town of Dong-Hoi. The next day brought us through the older Cham stronghold of Quang-tri to Hué, the Annamite capital of to-day.

From Dong-Hoi, just north of Quang-tri, traffic of all kinds increases. There is a completed stretch of railway to Tourane, and, off our route, the all-important side-road to Laos, already mentioned, reaches at Savan-nakhet the Mekong, the great inland water-way. But, for some reason, the clearest memories of that day's run are of animals. That, too, may have been because we were on a high-road to the capital. There were water-buffaloes, sleek as any that we had seen. Some were white; some had hoops of bamboo bound to their horns presumably to prevent their goring the unwary traveller; and one, more docile, was ridden by a lad standing erect on its back. Then—after a reversion to thirty miles of perfectly flat country—as we entered Hué by a long avenue of flamboyant trees, with its walled and moated city to our left and its Fleuve des Parfums on our right, we encountered a small elephant carrying a huge load of green-stuff—fodder for the elephants of the Imperial stables. Leaving him to a task that seemed ill-suited to his stately dignity, we crossed the big bridge that leads to the European quarter.

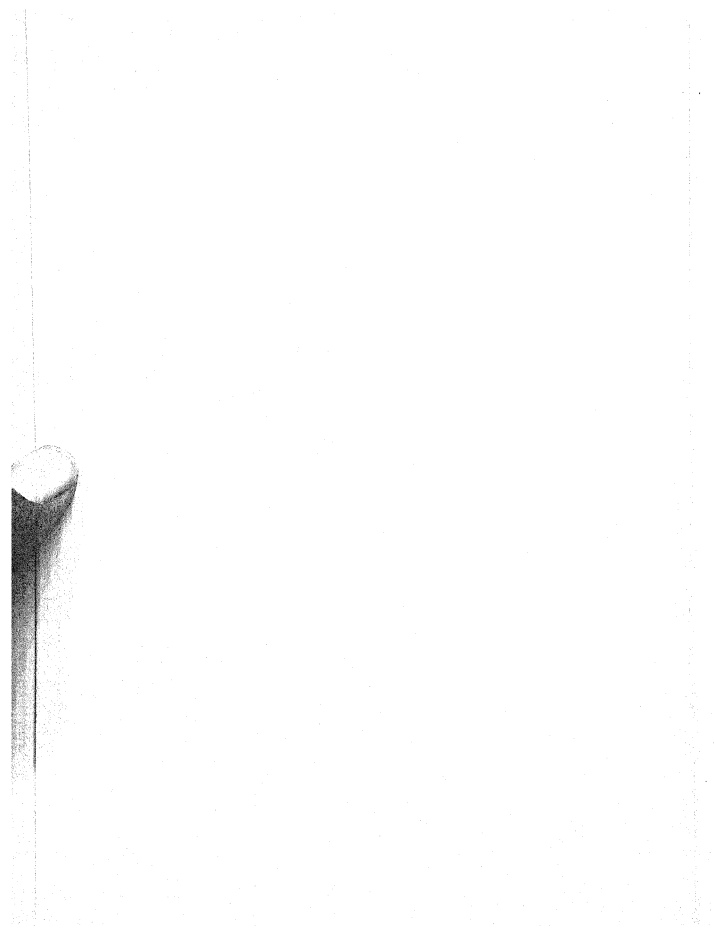
In that contrast of Imperial elephants and European quarter one gets perhaps the true picture of Hué—a contrast physically accentuated by the 'River of Perfumes', which separates the native Citadel from the Palace of the French *résident supérieur*. The Emperor of Annam still reigns; he was enthroned as a boy, three years ago,

with all the pomp and splendour of oriental ceremony, the mandarins making their *lays* of obeisance in rank after rank. The greatest of these mandarins still deliberate in the Palais du Comat as the high Council of State. But French troops are in the Citadel; the 'Forbidden City' is no longer forbidden; and, although in less elaborate ceremonial garb than the Emperor and his mandarins, the French Governor-General and the *résident supérieur* of Annam were no unimportant figures at the Emperor's enthronement. It is clear that he mounts his throne—and sometimes leaves it—at their willing. The semblance of Imperial supremacy survives—though one is reminded, 'mutatis mutandis', of the methods of an Augustus, who safely achieved his imperialism by a scrupulous conservation of the old republican forms and institutions, sharing administration and office with a Senate, but subtly and somehow acquiring for himself any office that involved decisions of importance, and leaving to the Senate administration that was little else than sinecure.

Hué, with its Citadel and its Imperial tombs, preserves much of the old glamour of the oriental monarchy—melancholy, perhaps, when the speed of an Imperial automobile is replacing the stately tramp of elephants or the measured, if less stately, tread of gilded litter or barouche; melancholy, yet still persistent, as it is no longer in its northern model of Peking. For Hué is Peking in miniature. Its palace is surrounded by a triple girdle. There is the Forbidden City; without that, the Imperial City; and both of these are within the Citadel—all dominated by the Cavalier du Roi, which is in the 'keeping' of the French! Again, the native city is pre-eminently Chinese in its buildings and in its market scenes. The most noticeable difference, perhaps, is the cone-shaped woven hat, fitted on top of the black turban that is worn by every Annamite. Incidentally, too, the ubiquitous jin-ricksha has achieved in Indo-China under the French the strange misnomer of *pousse-pousse*. These ply along the many pine-set avenues which, with the 'River of Perfumes'—so called from the sweet flowering trees and scented shrubs that adorn its



Sampans outside the Walls of Hué.



banks—make the environs of Hué so attractive. But the real glory of Hué lies further up the river, where, in a wonderful setting of peace and beauty, the melancholy grandeur of her old emperors still survives in the magnificent tombs which they themselves built that their souls might be assured a resting-place—and there, again, you have a final imitation of their northern prototypes, the masters of Peking.

These tombs are vast enclosures, sometimes walled and moated, with many a building, set amid lotus-covered lakes or wilder scenery of forest-land. The real grave you will never find, but you will see the sacred enceinte of its setting, the stele of Memory and the tablet of the Spirit; and it is the last that must have worship and service. So, within imposing surroundings, you will find the courtyard where mandarins and elephants of stone still attend their long-dead Emperor. Further on, amid all the familiar objects that he used in life, the living still bring him daily the sustenance that his soul may need and still set out the betel-box, that, even in death, he may indulge the practice that was the pleasure of his life. Surely an Annamite must wonder what is in store for the souls of Thanh-thai and Duy-tan, the deposed Emperors, if they must die and be buried in exile, afar from the tombs of their ancestors and lacking the due rites of their descendants.

The famous Route des Tombeaux follows the course of the river, fringed with these imposing monuments to the dynasty Nguyen. One notices in particular, perhaps, those of Gia-long, first of the line, and of Tu'-du'c, the enemy of France; for these are the great names in the later history of Annam, which brings us to the first episode of French penetration. The road to that episode takes us a little further south along *La Route Mandarine* to Tourane, for it was there actually that the French obtained their first settlement towards the close of the eighteenth century. It is a bare seventy miles—a beautiful stretch, with several *cols* and in the valleys between them the new feature of lagoons. The highest and most beautiful pass is that of the famous Col des Nuages, where the road climbs speedily

and precipitously along thickly wooded cliffs. It rises, in fact, two thousand feet from sea-level in some six miles and drops as quickly. On the summit there is an old Mandarin block-house, with glorious views back to Hué and forward to Tourane from the roof of one of the gateways. Twenty miles from the top the road enters Tourane, the port ceded to His Majesty Louis XVI. of France by Gia-long, Emperor of Annam, by the treaty of 1787 A.D.

It may be recalled that, owing to the weakness of the native Lê dynasty—the nominal kings of Annam, whose capital was at Hanoi—the real power southward lay with the Prince of Hué, who, by the end of the sixteenth century, had definitely established a separate and virtually independent principality in Central Annam. The Chams, paramount for centuries almost as far north as Vinh, had been driven further and further south. By A.D. 1500 they were subject to Annam, existing as a 'southern' protectorate for another two hundred years. By 1700 even this 'protected' authority had vanished; and already the Nguyen princes were installed as far south as Saigon at the expense of Cambodia, to whom Cochin-China then belonged. More and more of this territory in the delta-lands of the Mekong was usurped by the Hué princes during the eighteenth century, and it was here that Gia-long—known then as Nguyen Anh—took refuge in 1786, when a successful rebellion of three brothers, known as the Tay-so'n, drove the Prince of Hué from his principality and, in fact, overthrew the Lê dynasty at Hanoi. Nguyen Anh appealed in vain both to Cambodia and to Siam, but found an unexpected source of succour in Monseigneur Pigneau de Béhaine, a missionary bishop of France at Adran.

The appearance of a bishop indicates, of course, a period of peaceful penetration by missionary endeavour; and such there had been under Jesuits for some two centuries. Here we have one who proved himself, as high dignitaries of the Church in France often have, a far-sighted statesman to boot. The Bishop saw in the distress

of Nguyen Anh and in the disputes of Annam an opportunity for colonial expansion that would counteract France's recent losses of colonial possessions in India. He accordingly intervened in the Annamite quarrel, and promised the fugitive prince the active support of France in his struggle to recover his lost principality and to gain what might be the throne of a united Empire of Annam. He presented himself in person at the Court of Versailles, together with Canh Dzue, the son of Nguyen Anh, and obtained from Louis XVI. the promise of French reinforcements, with which—despite the French Revolution—he returned to Indo-China in 1789. Thirteen years later, by the help of these reinforcements, Nguyen Anh, with his capital at Hué, was enthroned as Gia-long, Emperor of the Annamite Empire, embracing Tongking and Cochinchina as well as Annam itself. France meanwhile had obtained settlements at Tourane, chief port of Annam, and in the island of Pulo Condor, south-east of Cochinchina, as a reward for her help—a concession of great importance, as it marks the first actual assignment of territory to France in Indo-China.

The arrival of the French roused resentment in native hearts; and the successors of grateful Gia-long indulged in no similar Gallomania. Three of them, in fact, were badly bitten with Francophobia—Minh-mang, who usurped the throne when de Béhaine's protégé, Canh Dzue, should have had it; then Thieu-tri; and, worst of all, Tu'-du'-c, whose thirty-five years of reign were a long and intermittent struggle against French intervention, closing a few weeks too soon to see his capital of Hué stormed by the hated foe in 1883 in their struggle for Tongking. It is a long and cruel tale of persecution, vented mainly upon missionaries or their Christian converts. One reads of Jesuit priests decapitated, garrotted and rent with hot irons, of Tu'-du'-c's wholesale massacres of Christians—he liked drowning them—or, at the least, of tortured imprisonment. In retaliation the French made various naval demonstrations on the coast in the neighbourhood of Tourane, though these had little effect on the Annamite

interior. Then in 1858, on the massacre of two missionary bishops—one of them a Spaniard—Napoleon III.'s government resolved on strong measures. Tourane was taken by a Franco-Spanish fleet and the fortified posts of the Col des Nuages attacked. Finally, the French decided that penetration via the Mekong would be more effective. Three years later Tu'du'c, faced with famine, submitted to treaty, as rice supplies were cut off—from the north, owing to a rebellion in Tongking; from the south, owing to the French occupation of the Mekong delta. By the treaty of 1862 the lower provinces of Cochin-China were ceded to France, and Christianity was officially permitted in Annam. The French were definitely in possession of an Indo-Chinese colony! That their troubles with Annam were by no means over has been shown in a previous chapter. This one claims that the tombs of Gia-long and Tu'du'c merit a special consideration.

From Tourane to Nha-Trang we travelled through the country of Cham relics, the chief of which are near Tourane itself. It was a stretch of country that brought a big change of scene. For a hundred miles south of Tourane to beyond Quang-ngai, although the road was edged with trees, the main impression was of rice-fields, wherever possible, and endless irrigation by means of basket, small water-bucket on caterpillar wheel, or big water-wheels with four men working them. The *norias* of Quang-ngai are, I believe, as famous as its old citadel. We were struck, too, with the very primitive huts of this part. Then, beyond the Col de Chillong Hoa, came a complete change to the country of coco-nut palms. It is little wonder that a Cham dynasty took the title of 'Cocotiers'! So through the quaint old town of Binh-Dinh, past mud huts and some of the many Cham towers in defaced red brick—to be brought abruptly back to the present from thoughts of the past by an Annamite policeman, who jumped on our car and guided us to our Qui-n'hon hotel. He would have expressed no surprise had he known that we had covered

the two hundred miles from Tourane in ten hours, in spite of ferries; and yet, twenty years ago, the natives would have run from the car, terrified of the 'spirit' that was in it—a spirit other than petrol. 'Tempora mutantur; nos et mutamur in illis', the Annamite for which I do not know. One wonders whether the native would understand even the idea; his capacity for assimilation is, and has always been, so great that he seems scarcely to realise the conception of actual change.

Another day brought us to Nha-Trang by a road clinging once again more closely to the coast, especially as it climbed the picturesque headland of Cap Varella, where the mountain-side, one of the many spurs of the Annamite chain, goes sheer down to the sea. The whole road twisted up and down steep hills, giving beautiful glimpses of the sea, or, at sea-level, wider views of palm-fringed bays with frequent salt-pans. Before reaching the headland climb we had to negotiate the Song Da-rang ferry, the longest of our experience, as already described. A few miles further, and we were climbing the Col Babonneau, with a glorious view of sea and needle-shaped island-rocks. The winding road at times overhangs the water, reminding one strongly of the 'Corniche', or of mountain roads in Syria; and, to add to the thrill, as the road wound itself round the face of the cliff, we negotiated a corner to encounter an unexpected auto-bus, and were lucky to avoid collision. Another pass and another, very short and steep with a down-sweep to mangrove swamps; then near the shore with a glimpse of sailing boats and misty islands; yet another pass, steep to climb and dropping as steeply to reach sea-level in half a mile; a final ferry—and we were in Nha-Trang, with its beautiful bay and background of wild mountains, just such a fishing village as one might happen on at home.

CHAPTER VIII

ANCIENT CHAM AND MODERN MOI

Itinerary: Nha-Trang, Phan-Rang, Dalat, Djiring, Phan-Thiêt.

GEOGRAPHICALLY the Cham of old history belongs partly to the previous chapter; but to-day the few survivors of that ancient and powerful race are to be found in this south-eastern corner, in strange juxtaposition to primitive Moi tribes. Their strangest feature, perhaps, is the persistence of the racial type amid surroundings so pathetically unlike the setting of their ancient glory. If they are a strange contrast to the wild Moi with whom some of them have taken refuge, they are a contrast, too, to their Annamite conquerors. For the Chams are a finer type. Their women may lay claim to a distinctive beauty; and, if that is not enough, there is the specific contrast of their garb, a flowing head-dress but less flowing raiment, both of which serve to distinguish them from the Annamite. A few survive, true to type, in this south-eastern refuge; but although many thousands must have been destroyed in the conquests that swept away the civilisation of their introduction and development, there must surely be in the Annamite of to-day something of that alien strain. There is certainly a noticeable change as you come south, and the inhabitants of Cochin-China itself, darker and of better physique than their neighbours to the north-east, show quite markedly the infusion of a Malay type. It is impossible to discuss here, still less to pronounce upon, the ethnological problems of Indo-China, which are legion. It is, I believe, accepted at least as a probability that the Chams were of Malaysian origin. Conceive them, then,

paramount at one time westward to embrace Siam and northward to Tongking. And, with due allowance for subsequent Malaysian infusion, for Chinese penetration in old days and for sporadic intermixture with aboriginals, you seem to have a fair explanation of the variations of the predominant Annamite of to-day.

The Chams must have been in occupation for long ages before the Chinese, by their domination of the Annamites in the third century B.C., came into contact with this more southerly people. Even Central Annam would seem to have come under Chinese control; for Chinese records, which are the source of our knowledge other than inscriptions, show that the Cham kingdom of history was carved out of this, the most southerly, sphere of Chinese penetration. For instance, Tra-kieu, situated near Tourane, appears first in history at this period as the seat of a Chinese prefecture; but after the second century of our era it is the site of a more or less hereditary Cham kingdom, established at the expense of the Chinese and in constant conflict with that Chinese dynasty which we have already seen controlling the Annamites of northern Indo-China.

Here the capital remained until the latter part of the eighth century, despite periodical sacking by the Chinese. For until A.D. 1000, when the Annamites rid themselves of Chinese domination, there is little else than a long tale of Chinese invasions of Champa or Cham invasions of northern Annam. In peaceful intervals of submission Champa sent embassies to the Chinese court, bearing precious gifts of wools, silks, frankincense, tortoise-shell and ivory. It must have been a slow-moving equipage along the Mandarin Road when these embassies conveyed gifts of elephant and rhinoceros themselves. But it was certainly less costly, as otherwise the Chinese came with their armies and took much more. Coming themselves, they carried off in booty gold, silver, and precious stones—one hundred thousand pounds of pure gold at

one sacking of Tra-kieu. At a later pillage, at the close of the sixth century, their booty comprised the golden tablets of a score of kings, a mere ten thousand prisoners whose ears they lopped, and—strange appendage—some thirteen hundred Buddhist books.

These details may serve to give a little idea of Cham wealth. That wealth lay in their temples. For from wherever the Chams may have come, they brought with them Hindu civilisation and the Hindu pantheon. Buddhism supervened later—was superimposed often on the earlier religion—but it was to the honour of the Brahministic trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva that the greatest and earliest of the Cham temples were built.

It was at the end of the fourth century that the first temple of Mi-so'n was built by Sri-Bhadra-Varman not far from the capital. A hundred and fifty years later it was destroyed by fire, but rebuilt almost immediately; and to-day this sacred city of the ancient kings of Champa presents a wonderful ensemble of archaeological remains. It is for the Chams what Angkor is for the Khmers of Cambodia—and that we shall see in a later chapter. The marvel is that more than a third of some seventy buildings survived the sacking by Chinese, Annamite and Cambodian forces. Like Angkor, these structures of brick have been alike hidden and preserved by the encroaching jungle, to be rediscovered by French archaeologists only within the last fifty years.

Mi-so'n, with its Valley of the Kings, was the seat of the Brahministic cult. One reads even that its founder's successor abdicated his throne and went on a pilgrimage to the Ganges. Later, Buddhism came in, as elsewhere, and obtained an increasingly stronger hold. We have heard already of the loot of the Buddhist books, and by the end of the ninth century there arose, a few miles from Mi-so'n, the new capital of Dong-du'ong, 'the sacred plain', so called from the great monastery consecrated to Buddha, the vast ruins of which remain to-day.

This capital was destroyed and the temples pillaged by Lê Hoan, the man who overthrew the Chinese domina-

tion and established the first Annamite dynasty at the close of the tenth century. That is really the beginning of the end. For either directly or indirectly the invasions of the Cham rulers had helped the Annamites to overthrow their northern lords, and, once free of the Chinese yoke, Annam proceeded to extend her authority through the centuries further and further south. As a result, the Cham capital for five hundred years was set away to the south at Cha-ban—not far from Binh-Dinh. These are centuries of almost continual warfare by land and sea. In 1064, for instance, an Annamite army and fleet, acting together, took the capital; and the Annamite king made a triumphal entry into Hanoi, with Rudra-Varman III., the captured Cham king, walking behind his chariot with hands bound behind his back and a cheering escort of five executioners for himself and his family. He regained his liberty, however, but at the expense of his northern stretch of territory from Quang-tri to Dong-Hoi.

Towards the close of the century there are a few brief years of Cham greatness under Hari-Varman IV., of whom one gets a happier picture. Uniting the stock of 'Coco-nut palm' and 'Areca', he was victorious against both Annam and Cambodia; and the account of his embassy to China reflects his wealth. He is clad in silk, adorned with gold, and his head-dress is of gold, set with precious stones. As he walks abroad he has an equipage of fifty men and ten women, discoursing sweet music and carrying his 'chewing outfit' on golden platters. Even in death he is not forgotten. For fourteen wives die with him; and the ashes of their bones are scattered in his honour over the waters of the deep. Is it unkind to add that this short-lived Croesus was a great eater?

His success, too, was short-lived. Annam was not the Chams' only enemy. A century later they were, for a spell, a 'protectorate' of Cambodia. Another century, and Mongol fleets are at Qui-n'hon to enforce the payment of tribute to the great Kublai Khan, whose friend Marco Polo visited both Tongking and Champa a few years later on his return from the court of Cambalu. It may

have been against these troubles that the king negotiated marriages with a Malay princess of the East Indies and a princess of Annam—the latter at the price of Hué. But they do not appear to have helped matters, as his successor was a prisoner at Hanoi; and, as in other countries, matrimonial alliances were but aids to conquest.

In fine, the beginning of the fifteenth century saw Champa's last desperate effort to save her liberties; and, by a strange turn of the wheel, Champa and China were allies. Despite this Chinese aid, before the century was over, Annam was in possession to the north of Cap Varella, and, as we have already seen, the Cham rulers kept what they kept in the south only as vassal viceroys of Annam. Two centuries afterwards even this semblance of power had gone.

With these brief records in mind, it may be possible to picture more easily that long stretch of the Mandarin Road resounding through the centuries with the tramp of slow-moving armies and elephants, Cham, Chinese, Annamite—marching north, marching south, now advancing to glorious victory, now retreating in ignominious rout. And it is the finally routed Cham who looms largest in one's imagination, just because he has so strangely disappeared, leaving only the melancholy monuments of his former glory; just because the greatest of them have been so strangely saved from the wreckage of his enemies; just because the *Tour Cham*, so frequent a feature of the road from Quang-tri, is not only a constant reminder of him but a pathetic reminder too, in that it may now be the temple of his sworn enemy and dedicated to strange divinities whom the Cham never knew.

It is in this way that some of the Cham towers still survive, at least partly intact, like that at Nha-Trang. There the sanctuary of Po Nagar, part relic of a temple of larger size, is used to-day by the Annamite, although Po Nagar is now a changed divinity of Annamite name and Annamite attributes. To-day the fisher folk of Nha-Trang

make their strange offerings in the dark chambers where, long centuries ago, the Chams worshipped their Brahministic divinity. Lying picturesquely on its hill, overlooking the bay and village, this sanctuary preserves intact the true Cham type of brick towers, roofed with a lofty pyramid, the doorways covered with inscriptions. It is an epitome of Cham history; for the original temple was sacked by Malay pirates; who, one is glad to hear, were afterwards beaten in a sea battle. Later, greedy rivals of Cambodia stole a golden statue from the rebuilt temple; again one is glad to know that they perished for their sin. A hundred years later Rudra-Varman made presentations to the goddess, which, in a just world, might surely have saved him from that ignominious entry into Hanoi, already described. Finally, it has been degraded, as the Cham must think, to the worship of an alien divinity of the conquering Annamite—and that is how its inscriptions have been preserved and how we come to know anything of its history at all.

Of treasures, none are to be seen to-day; and it is by this road that we come at last to the Mois. For the Chams appear to have fled for shelter to the hills, and the story is that they took with them such of the treasure of their temples as their enemies had not pillaged, confiding it to the trust of the Moi headmen with whom they took refuge. The secret of such a cache is with the headman of a tribe to-day, a secret handed down from generation to generation like the traditional custom-law under which these tribes still live—and there surely you have a romantic setting and the makings of a goodly 'treasure' tale.

We had our first sight of Mois towards the end of our day's run from Nha-Trang, as we were approaching Dalat. For some seventy miles we followed the Mandarin Road nearly into Phan-Rang, where one first finds the Cham of to-day. Here the great highway becomes a track; so we turned inland by the wonderful road which the French

have made to the uplands. It is a road of jungle with a vista of blue, blue hills. The road climbs for thirty miles with many a twist and turn, through forest country, at first tropical jungle; later, pine-trees appeared as we reached the higher levels. Another forty miles, and the road is crossing the wild, open valley of the high plateau land to Dalat in its setting amid cleared forests.

There, five thousand feet above sea-level, the French have built a thoroughly modern hill-station. The resort of French officials and merchants from all over Indo-China, it is to them what Simla is to the British in India. Unfortunately, it rained all the days—and nights—that we spent there, and we were unable to see much of the country. It was strikingly cold, too, with a strong wind, which seemed to blow the rain through all the windows of the hotel, even when shut; and we were very glad to spend the nights under blankets, and thoroughly enjoyed really hot baths—for the first time for weeks, as of late we had liked to have them as cold as we could possibly get them.

Dalat, with its straight-cut avenues, its Palace Hotel, its electricity and so much else that is modern, seems a strange place in which to make one's first encounter with a primitive Moi. The word means simply 'savage', and, like *kha* in Laos, is used by the Annamite to designate any of these aboriginal tribes of the interior. The Annamite of the lowlands looks down upon these primitives with a great contempt. There is apparently a continual, if latent, hostility between them. The Annamite, with his power of assimilation, is rapidly modernised, and he seems inclined to parade his superiority of civilisation, a superiority that is not above the meanest tricks—of theft and other—at the expense of the simple Moi. And there you have a function of the French *résident* in these inland provinces—the office of peace-maker.

The coming of the French and of all that they brought with them must have been a rude shock of awakening to the Moïs. They certainly are primitive, their clothing is seldom more than a loin-cloth; and they still employ, alike

for hunting and self-defence, the old spear and the cross-bow and arrow that we associate with the early savage. Their dwellings are equally primitive. They are long but very low huts, with fires, but no outlet for them. The floor is often on raised poles, difficult for the tyro to negotiate; and the refuse drops conveniently between these. Add the fumes of a whole family smoking—and you have some idea of the atmosphere of a Moi hut. It is extraordinary how, stark as they practically are, they can withstand the change from their stifling habitations to the real cold of these uplands. There is another type of dwelling, still more characteristic; that is the hut set on high bamboo poles far above ground level, with a long ladder to the door. They are still low in themselves and must be cramped quarters. At times one sees a whole village, built high in a jungle-clearing on these pole-structures, or elsewhere high up in the trees themselves.

These are, of course, protection against the attacks of tiger, which abound. Indeed, owing to the depredations among the natives of one district, the French authorities, when we were there, were even prepared to invite enthusiastic sportsmen of any country to come to help them in the extermination of these tigers, who were decimating that and other districts. Admittedly, one hears a goodly repertory of travellers' tales about tiger, both of this region and in the jungle of Cochin-China and Cambodia; we were ourselves assured by one lady—a traveller and a distinguished journalist—that a tiger had leapt into her car as she made the journey to Angkor. Still, such tales apart, the fact remains that two tigers were shot by a French official at only eight hundred yards from his garden; and the decimation of the Mois in certain areas is a matter of actual fact.

Personally, we did not see any throughout our journey, although we had to go to the length of travelling with arms ready in case of need over stretches where their appearance is possible. A Moi 'caravan', setting out for a hunt, the kind of organised hunt that does take place, must be an interesting sight—the long strange file track-

ing through jungle paths. The Moi, if he has anything to carry, piles his load to any height on a basket slung on his back, to leave his arms free for the inevitable spear, bow and arrow. A pole, trailing behind as he walks, relieves him of the load at any halt. A knife and, if possible, an umbrella complete the picture of the Moi on the road, as we saw him.

The umbrella is symbolic. It seems a strange appurtenance to the scarce-clad savage. But it is no stranger than a Moi riding a bicycle, or watching a cinematographic show; and these are becoming common happenings. Yet he cannot write; he counts by notches cut with his knife on a stick, in true savage fashion; he drinks *chum-chum*—the native beverage of alcohol distilled from rice—and drinks it to his fill, at strange, barbaric ceremonies to the appeasing of strange spirits; he has his teeth filed flat before he makes love to a Moi belle, who has undergone the same excruciating agony. There are countless contrasts of the primitive and the ultra-modern that one might draw. But perhaps that little picture of the typical Moi standing by the road-side on the way to Djiring, with his black cotton umbrella, gives as good an impression as any. He looked so incongruous; and it stirred thoughts of the responsibility that lies with France. Modern invention has made it so easy to-day to bring the west, and the most modern features of western civilisation, into these untutored wilds, that one wonders whether types so primitive will stand the shock of so immense a change. As far as we met them, they simply seemed interested in us, and they were certainly quite friendly. French officials, too, assured us that, if properly treated and handled in the right way, they were very easy to work with in the 'bush'. The thought of 'bush' suggests a concluding comment on these interesting tribes. What struck one most about them was their strong contrast to their neighbour the Annamite. Much darker in colour, of much finer physique than he, they reminded us much more of the negro types of Central Africa. These aboriginal tribes of the Indo-Chinese hinterland constitute, I believe, a deep problem

of ethnology; and we can but give the impression that they left.

These Moïs spread southward to the province of Bien-hoa in the colony of Cochin-China. It would be interesting to follow their tracks through the jungle, but our road takes us back to the eastern coast. It was a wonderful road through beautiful scenery, passing a number of waterfalls, in particular Les Chutes de Lieng Khanh, a big fall and very lovely, in a wide river sown with little islands. At Djiring itself we came on the new feature of coffee plantations in jungle-clearings. A little more climbing, and then the final descent over the Col Haloum, with a view of scattered firs standing out dark against green mountains, and a blue distance beyond, reminiscent of Kabylia—a perfectly wonderful and amazing view, unfolding, as the road descended round and down, round and down along the edge of precipices. Later, there was a *bac* to negotiate—a temporary and very primitive ferry composed of several canoes, with a platform laid across them to take the cars, and a rope on each side by which the natives pulled the ferry over.

So, with many a glimpse, on this downward trek, of Moi villages in high trees and of Moïs themselves—some road-mending, others travelling, all cheerful—we came eventually, through a stretch of *padi* fields, back to the coast and to the Mandarin Road at Phan-Thiêt. It is a very pretty little town, with its estuary full of fishing smacks; and there is good proof of its latitude in its market stalls, stacked high with pine-apple, sugar-cane, green melon and papaya.

The remainder of the run through Annam belongs more naturally to the following chapter on Cochin-China; and this south-easterly point of Phan-Thiêt is no unsuitable place at which to take farewell of ancient Cham and modern Moi.

CHAPTER IX

THE COLONY OF COCHIN-CHINA

Itinerary: Annam Frontier, Bien-hoa, Saigon, Cambodian Frontier.

A GLANCE at the map will show at once the vast plain that constitutes the French Colony of Cochin-China. Practically the whole country is one enormous, low-lying plain, covered—as our road brought us to it—first through thick jungle and then by wide areas of inundated marsh. The forty miles of the Mandarin Road, running due west to the frontier from Phan-Thiêt, were the beginning of this southern expanse of plain, which we followed—with a north-west trend from Saigon—to the borders of Siam.

Just as Central Siam is the basin of the Menam, and flooded by its inundations—as we discovered later to our cost—so Cambodia and Cochin-China constitute the similarly inundated basin of the Mekong and its distributaries. The delta begins as far north as Phnom-Penh, the capital of Cambodia; and it can therefore be appreciated that the western part of Cochin-China is little more than marshy plain. South of Saigon, the Mekong from the west, and the Don-nai from the east, coming down through Bien-hoa from the uplands of Annam, with their tributaries and distributaries and the countless *arroyos*, or channels of irrigation, made by nature or cut by man—all have made and are still making this southern delta. One might almost call it a sea of mud-lands; and the dreary flat is only accentuated by the spur which the Annamite chain sends out to the sea at Cap St. Jacques.

The French officials of Saigon and Bien-hoa talked often of St. Jacques, for it is the sea-cooled resort where they can take welcome refuge from the steaming vapours

of these tropic inland towns, unless longer spell of leave enables them to withdraw to the bracing heights of Dalat. These delta-lands of the south are a strange contrast to those which we had previously seen in Tongking. Actually we had higher temperatures in Tongking, but in the north there is a greater range over the year; whereas, in the more tropical Colony with its temperature much more constant, we found that the humidity of the atmosphere made the climate far more trying. The native labourer of these southern rice-fields is a much limper being than his kindred of the north, engaged on similar work. There is all the rich luxuriance of tropical vegetation; and an air photograph of Saigon gives one a striking impression of the tropical jungle in which the city is set and through which we came to it.

Even before the road from Phan-Thiêt reaches the frontier it has already plunged into the virgin jungle through which it takes its westward way to Bien-hoa and Saigon. The outstanding feature of this stretch is not *padi* field, but rubber plantation. Sometimes the clearing is quite small; sometimes the plantations are of enormous extent. But, big or small, they lie in the setting of thick jungle which has been cleared by French enterprise and native industry in comparatively recent years. There, in embryo, are the tyres of the French motor industry. We were told that Michelin planted as many as a dozen million trees per annum. This is an example of a vast and successful enterprise. The jungle could probably tell many another tale of enterprise less successful, of grim struggles against the forest, bringing ruin or death to the planter instead of the fortune of which he dreamed.

There, to an accompaniment of tropical rain-storms, you have the picture eastward of Saigon. Westward, to the Cambodian frontier, the road is making its way towards the head of the Mekong delta; and monotonous those fifty miles are. With an equally uninteresting stretch across the frontier, they provided us with the one really dull journey along the whole length of the Mandarin Road. Here it crosses the area of inundated marsh-land, where

rival *padi* fields replace the rubber plantations of the forest clearings. Their tedious recurrence is unrelieved until one approaches the more immediate neighbourhood of the river itself. Even the road was bad. Through the jungle it had been of good surface and welcome in its shade, with the clearings to break monotony. But this westward stretch, uninteresting in its dead level save for native traffic, suddenly degenerated in surface too, which prevented our covering it at the speed that its dullness prompted; one is unable—or at least it is unwise—to ‘speed’ over enormous pot-holes. Still, the quaint little tiled village of Go Dau Ha and the cars’ race across its double ferry, already described, brought a little diversion a few miles before we reached the frontier.

To return for a moment to the towns. The life of the Colony centres, of course, in Saigon and what is practically its appendage, Cholon. Bien-hoa, which we came to first, is quite a big town with its huge aviation centre, its purely French cafés and its carriages. It was here that we saw the curious pony-carriages, reminiscent of Rangoon and Mandalay. They are called, I believe, *malabars*—a name that is equally given in Cochin-China to Indians or anything Indian. They are like tiny four-wheelers, boxed in with shutters all round. The small Cambodian ponies seem recalcitrant; perhaps they resent the domination of their Annamite drivers.

It was in Bien-hoa, too, that we met a Lieutenant Schertzer, of the French Flying Corps, and his charming Russian wife. The town is, as explained, a big centre of French Government Aviation; and we learnt from them much of the developments that the French have made in this branch of Colonial Service. Aeronautical photography alone must have been of inestimable value in making rapid and exhaustive survey of the physical characteristics of the country. Lieutenant Schertzer, too, had been stationed in Laos, and we are indebted to him for a wealth of information about the interesting tribes of that interior; we ourselves met only their Annamite fringe.

By a link of ideas, not immediately obvious, the Avia-

tion service brings us—through opium—to Saigon. Opium is forbidden in the Aviation Service and manufactured in the capital. The opium trade is in fact a French Government monopoly, as much as tobacco is. There is a factory for its manufacture in Hanoi as well as in Saigon, and it is on the boundaries of Tongking and Laos rather than in the south that French justification of their monopoly lies. It is by those borders that smuggled opium comes; and the French maintain that a government monopoly is the best means of control. The whole question of opium traffic is internationally 'sub judice', in the hands of a League of Nations committee of investigation, authorised at Geneva during last summer's session of the Assembly. We may leave it with the observations that the French Government reaps a goodly revenue from its monopoly, that Frenchmen admittedly smoke, the Chinese of course and the Annamite man, but never an Annamite woman, and never—unless he breaks regulations—a member of the French Government Aviation Service.

We have reached Saigon by way of opium; but the trade in this is negligible in comparison with that in rice. Saigon is the outlet for the great supplies grown in the inundated areas of the Mekong basin, in Cambodia as well as in Cochin-China itself. This traffic is all water-borne by way of the river and its many affluents and diffuents. It is significant that, with considerable railway development elsewhere, there is at present not a bit of railway westward from Saigon towards Cambodia; south-west, the line runs only via Cholon to Mi-tho, lying on the northern bank of the main northern arm of the Mekong itself. The rivers and the *arroyos* carry those cargoes of rice that go to make Saigon one of the greatest rice-exporting ports of the world. It stands some forty miles up the Saigon River on its right bank, reached only by a very tortuous journey through the mud-flats of the delta. One gets perhaps the best impression of the magnitude of the trade from the great Chinese *arroyo* on the south side of the city, covered in its entirety—as it seems to be—by great rice-laden barges stretching as far as eye can see.

The Chinese *arroyo*, too, is a fitting text for any comment on Indo-Chinese trade. The native, Annamite or Cambodian, works in the fields; he has his own primitive methods of dehushing the rice, by beating it on wicker-screens; or he labours in the vast *rizières* of Saigon, the factories where elaborate processes of decortication, grading and polishing turn out all the varieties of the marketable commodity and cover Saigon with a mantle of smuts. All the commercial activities involved and the many trades developed to meet the needs and pleasures of the natives engaged in this and other industries are in the hands of the Chinese. This is true of the whole of Indo-China, of Siam also and even of British Malaya. Throughout, the greater part of the 'business' of the country seems to be in the hands of Chinese merchants. Various reasons were given us for such a condition of affairs. The main one was that, in most parts, the better-class natives of the country considered themselves too grand to indulge in commerce and trade. In part, however, it would appear that the natives are too lazy to work sufficiently hard to compete with the Chinese. Whatever the reasons may be, it was noticeable that, in most of the big villages and towns, all the shops and businesses were in Chinese hands. In Saigon and in Phnom-Penh, the two capitals of the south—to take even a low sphere of occupation—the ricksha-coolies are Chinese, because the natives of the lower class are either too lazy or of too weak a physique to undertake the heavy work of a ricksha-coolie. In private houses, most of the domestic servants were Chinese. In fact, except for the hard-working peasant-class, who either toiled in their rice-fields or on other agricultural work, or at fishing or other water-borne callings—with mining as a last desperate resort—the bulk of the native inhabitants of all these countries of Indo-China either obtained posts in the Government Administration, or became motor-car drivers and mechanics, or else did nothing at all. It may be, however, that, with increased education and French example and encouragement, the better-class of native, especially Annamite, will more and more realise the possibilities of

big business and save for himself and his family the profits which now go to the Chinese—and to France.

This Chinese penetration is naturally pronounced in northern towns like Hanoi and Haiphong, and reappears strongly in Central Annam in the Chinese city of Fai-fo near Tourane. But, evident as it is in almost every possible centre of trade, big or little, it is pre-eminently obvious in the extraordinary development of Cholon, a purely Chinese town, which is a suburb of Saigon. Perhaps one should not call it purely Chinese, for architecturally it has a curious strain of French, which distinguishes it from a normal Chinese city. Under this influence, too, it is set on lines less twisted and cramped than the typical city of China. Otherwise, it is Chinese—in its incessant life of buying and selling by day and night. Even the heat of a tropic noontide seems to induce only a somnolence, and not that complete cessation of labour—it seems, almost, of life—which is so striking a feature of 'existence' in Saigon itself, with its long midday siesta. Day and night there seems to be an endless stream of human traffic, hustled and jostled together in what is their life—the struggle to make enough to take them back to their native land, that they may die and be laid in death with their ancestors. It is from Canton and Swatow, and other such big cities of South China that these Chinese come in poverty and to which it is their ambition to return—rich. Officially, too, they are collected in 'congregations' according to the cities of their origin, and it is on the basis of these organisations that the poll-tax and other taxes are levied. Thus the government of the country does its best to get something out of these Chinese, whose 'flair' for trade enables them to get so much out of the country. The Chinese is born to business; and, what he does not get by trading with the natives, he probably gets by pandering to their weaknesses. This refers much less to opium than to gambling; for the Annamite is an inveterate gambler, and the Chinese takes good care that he has ample opportunity for the indulgence of so lucrative a vice. It is true that the Annamite has only himself to blame—in more ways than one. For,

historically also, it was he who gave the Chinese their original footing in the present colony, when, more than two hundred years ago, he assisted them to obtain a settlement at Ha-tien, a harbour lying just to the south of the frontier of Cambodia, to whom the bulk of the colony then belonged. A brief digression into this history will bring us to the French occupation of Cochin-China and so to Saigon itself, which, as a result of that occupation, is to-day the 'Paris of the East'.

We have already seen in the history of Champa an example of Annamite expansion by means of matrimonial alliance. There is a similar case in Annamite relations with Cambodia. Until the seventeenth century, the latter had included the greater portion of the present colony of Cochin-China, the Chams probably controlling the coastal districts and the eastern part of it until the period of their decline. With that decline and the consequent extension of Annamite rule southward down the belt of what we now call Annam, and with a later but similar decline in the power of the Cambodian Khmers, the Annamite saw the possibility of westward expansion. It begins with subtlety. At the opening of the seventeenth century, a Princess of Hué marries the Cambodian king; a few years later, with Cambodian authorisation, the Annamites have an establishment at Moi-xul, not far inland from Cap St. Jacques. That is the beginning of the end. By the middle of the century they have got Bien-hoa as a reward for help in expelling from Cambodia a king who turned Moham-medan and favoured Mohammedan Malays. The old queen, the Nguyen princess of Hué, brought in Annam in more senses than one. By the end of the century, Annam is definitely established at Saigon itself, installing as viceroy one Ang-non, a pretender to the Cambodian throne. The eighteenth century is simply a story of Annamite expansion through Cochin-China at Cambodian expense. It is no wonder that another Ang-non, true king of Cambodia, showed little sympathy with Gia-long of Hué,

when he took refuge in Cochin-China, and appealed for aid—or rather demanded troops as a right—against the rebel Tai-so'n brothers, who, as we have previously seen, drove him from his principality. It may have been short-sighted policy. At any rate, at the opening of the nineteenth century, Cochin-China—as the viceroyalty of Gia-dinh, with its capital at Saigon—was part of the united Empire which Gia-long established with the help of his French reinforcements.

Still, it must be remembered that it was largely Cambodian in population; and it is not surprising to hear that Saigon was in 1833 the centre of a serious rebellion in Cochin-China against Gia-long's successor, Minh-mang. The famous 'Plain of the Tombs' in the neighbourhood reminds one of the cruelty with which the rebellion was crushed; more than a thousand rebels were executed there. They, perhaps, were the lucky ones; for the rebel Mandarins had to go caged to Hué to die a slow, tortured death.

Another Saigon tomb is even more significant. It is that of Monseigneur Pigneau de Béhaine, the statesman-prelate who brought the French to Indo-China. The very forts of Saigon, which were taken and retaken during the troubles of Gia-long and the subsequent rebellion, were the work of French engineers; and those same forts fell to French guns not thirty years after the rebellion. Monseigneur de Béhaine brought the French reinforcements to Cochin-China in more senses than one—a retributive echo of the action of the Hué princess who became a queen of Cambodia. But, if Annam received a just retribution, Cambodia did not get revenge, other than the satisfaction of seeing her ancient enemy lose her ill-gotten gains. For, by the Treaty of 1862, Annam ceded to France the three lower provinces of Cochin-China; and these, with three further provinces ceded a few years later, were constituted the French Colony of Cochin-China. This, despite any Cambodian hopes of restoration, has remained a French Colony, and, as such, distinct in government from the 'protectorates' established in the other territories of Indo-China. Saigon is the headquarters of this Government and

the residence of the French representative, who, in similar distinction from the *résident supérieur* of a Protectorate, is here called the Governor.

Of outward proof of the French penetration and occupation of Cochin-China, there is none better than Saigon itself. Here are streets and squares, with names that recall that penetration—Place Rigault de Genouilly, Boulevard Charner, Rue la Grandière, in respective and respectful honour of three of France's Admirals, the stormer of Tourane, the stormer of Saigon fort, and the Colony's first Governor. These are but three, and there are I know not how many more—a veritable record of French activity since those early days of occupation. There are stranger echoes of a more recent warfare in such names as Rue Joffre and even Rue Miss Cavell; and, lest it be thought that these are mere echoes of a Western war reverberating idly in an Eastern town, there is the monument erected to the memory of men of Cochin-China who gave their lives *pour la patrie* in the great World War. The Annamite soldier, indeed, was no infrequent sight on the Western Front; and he proved himself no mean soldier. To-day, he is conspicuous in his own land, with the inevitable cone-shaped hat, brass-topped for military purposes. In Cambodia, too, one sees the French-drilled native, turbaned here, but complete with modern khaki and 'service' equipment; and, even in the hinterland, *Moi* squads are drilled by *Mois* to French words of command in the extremely 'light' equipment which is natural to them.

But names have led us away from Saigon. And it is not in mere names that Saigon proclaims itself French. The city is wholly French, in design, and in atmosphere other than physical. Were it not for the tropic atmosphere, the tropic vegetation, and the natives themselves, Saigon might well be mistaken for any French provincial town—just such a town as Abbeville. There are the same suburban avenues, with their double row of trees for shade, the clubs and, of these, what is assuredly the Frenchman's

true club, the ubiquitous café. From the air one gets an impression of luxuriant jungle, in which the French have cleared, on luxurious scale, wide squares and broad avenues leading to the magnificent buildings, which gleam white and conspicuous from their setting of vivid tropic green—and, most conspicuous among them, the magnificent palace of the Governor, erected at a cost of a million *piastres*.¹ There has certainly been no stint of expenditure in making Saigon a truly modern and western capital. Space forbids any catalogue of buildings; but the Cathedral, the typical Municipal Theatre, the still more typical Bureau de Postes et Télégraphes, in very name as much as in themselves, proclaim in that oriental setting their French, and only French, origin.

When you come to the streets and boulevards in the central part of the town you might well be in Paris itself. The shops are completely French; only French goods are sold—of this we have already spoken and given explanation. And, if the shops are French, the cafés are still more so. There is the same café life of the metropolis. A bare few are passing travellers. The bulk of the crowd that throngs the veranda of the Hôtel Continental and others—particularly in the cool of the evening—are the permanent French residents of Saigon, living that peculiarly French club-life of the café, just as they would if they were at home in Paris or in any provincial town of France.

Speaking of Saigon one feels almost a need to qualify what has already been said of Hanoi. The latter is the *administrative* capital of Indo-China and, as such, bears indeed the stamp of France; whereas Saigon is the *commercial* capital of Indo-China—and a French town. In Hanoi, though French influence is pronounced, there is the native city, and much of native culture. In Saigon itself, there is nothing of the kind. There you have the essential difference. In far-flung Indo-China, in an oriental setting of tropical jungle or rice-fields, these towns are symbolic of French occupation in Indo-China. And of that

¹ The standard coin of Indo-China—equivalent of a Mexican dollar, approximately a florin.

occupation the symbol-in-chief is the Palace of the Governor, where, incidentally, we had the honour to lunch—and 'thereby hangs a tale', which, if slight, illustrates, as well as one might, the strange setting of Saigon.

In the jungle forest, which covers such wide tracts of the country and in which Saigon itself has been laid in comparatively recent years, there is considerable opportunity for big-game hunting. Saigon boasts as one of its sights a famous Jardin Botanique, abutting on the Arroyo de l'Avalanche, the northern boundary of the town. There we saw not only a wonderful wealth of tropic flowers and birds, but the wild beasts whom we had expected to see with less safety on the open road—elephants, panthers, and, last but not least in Indo-China, the tiger, whom the terrified native knows euphemistically and respectfully as 'ong cop', my lord the tiger. It was this visit to the Botanical Gardens that suggested big-game hunting as a topic of conversation at the subsequent luncheon. But an old colonel, a French official, when challenged on the possibilities of *la chasse*, professed no interest in *ong cop*. He confessed that he preferred 'la chasse dans les villes', as it was 'plus amusante'; and he was certainly not thinking of the Jardin Botanique. Saigon is French indeed.

There remains, too, the consideration that Saigon is not only a French town, but a port—the largest in the country. The French would estimate it on a par with such a home port as Bordeaux, with rice and rubber in lieu of wine. It lies—and this spells a certain importance—at the meeting of two fairly established currents of ocean traffic, the European flowing eastward via India and the Malay Peninsula, and that flowing westward from the United States by way of Japan, China and the Philippines. It is little wonder that the boulevard cafés of Saigon are the scene of those meetings on which wanderers happen with a strange frequency in the far places of the world. We had just such an experience ourselves. In Saigon I found a brother-officer, an old friend of days in Syria, whom we had left five weeks before in Shanghai! This time we left

THE COLONY OF COCHIN-CHINA

him in Saigon, bound once more for Shanghai—only to come upon him again unexpectedly more than six months later in a Cairo street. That was even more a chance meeting, as normally our journey would never have taken us to Cairo at all, and we came to be there only by way of diversion and in an endeavour to while away some few days of the rain which held us up for five weeks in Beirūt. Such are the coincidences of travel.

But—to avoid misunderstanding—if it has been emphasised that Saigon is French, and that men and manners French are much in evidence, it must be remembered that this prominence is in Saigon. Even in the city itself, there is a medley of oriental races; and in the Colony as a whole the French number a bare few thousands amid some three million natives. The bulk of these are Annamite; but, with the relics of Cambodian and Cham of earlier occupations, with Chinese, Malay and other Asiatic penetration, with nearly two per cent of the population aboriginal tribes, it results that the Colony itself presents a very fair motley of all the races of Indo-China.

CHAPTER X

THE ANCIENT KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

Itinerary: Svai-Rieng, Phnom-Penh, Kompong-Luong,¹ Kg-Thom, Siem Reap, Angkor; back to Kg-Luong, Kg-Chhnang, Pursat, Battambang.

PHNOM-PENH, the capital, is, in more senses than one, the key to the country of Cambodia, a land of many waters haunted by the ghosts of ancient Khmer glory. For it is at Phnom-Penh that the great waters of Cambodia unite and separate; it is at Phnom-Penh, in the court of King Monivong, that the faded splendour of the Khmer kingdom survives, a sorry shadow of its former self.

The physical aspect of the capital finds expression in the local name of 'Four Faces', under which it is known to the natives. This name it owes to its site at a point on the Mekong River where the two northern arms converge into one huge river, only to divide again into two streams at a distance of a mile or two to the south of the town. These latter have to be negotiated on the journey from Saigon; and, as explained in an earlier chapter, the strength of the current involved a ferry of a more substantial nature than those previously encountered. At the first, the river is immensely wide, carrying down a flood of thick brown water, which was almost rough in the centre of the stream, as the steam *bac* took us across. Its inundations had been more and more obvious as we approached this main arm of the river along the road from Svai-Rieng, the fishermen's houses on low-raised piles giving a picturesque relief to the previous monotony of the swampy flats of the

¹ 'Kompong', abbreviated 'Kg', is Cambodian for a water-side landing-place and/or market.

road from Saigon. Between the two arms we ran by the side of the river along a good road raised on an embankment, through country reminiscent of the Gambia, crossing the second arm by a steamer-towed barge a short distance from the city itself.

But it is the northern arms that bring one to the heart of this water-fed country, and particularly the western of these, known to the French as the 'Bras du Lac', which connects with the Great Lake, the Tonlé Sap, in a truly extraordinary way. The waters of Phnom-Penh have in effect a very odd appearance, seeming to run in different directions, as one watches them flowing past the islands of the river. This oddity is not entirely illusion, as in actual fact there must be points at which the same river achieves the effect of running in opposite directions. We saw it not long after midsummer, when the river begins to bring down its annual flood of melted snows from Tibet. The Tonlé Sap operates as a vast reservoir for this flood, which empties into it northward through the Bras du Lac; with the abatement of the flood-tide, the current of this western arm will be reversed and flow southward, emptying the Great Lake to its dry season level of some five feet—a strange contrast to its flood level of nearly fifty!

There, in the Great Lake, lies the big source of Cambodian wealth. It is teeming with fish, which are caught in vast nets towards the close of flood-time. Several thousands of tons are exported annually from Cambodia, although a big supply is exhausted by local consumption, principally in the manufacture of the native sauce of 'nuoc-mam', which we have already encountered in Annam.

It is significant that, apart from small local effort, the bulk of the fishing population is Annamite. The Cambodian is apparently a lazy fellow, satisfied if he gets the bare necessities of life; and these he finds easily—rice from his inundated lands, flavoured with the fish-sauce which is brought almost literally to his door.

It will be clear that the bulk of the country—and certainly the long stretch that we covered along the two main road systems that run north and south of the Great Lake

—is literally fed by the Mekong waters; for a large period of the year it is actually covered by them. At Kompong-Luong, for instance, where a steam-ferry crosses the wide stream of the Bras du Lac twenty miles above Phnom-Penh, all the houses of the big native river-side village are on high piles on either side of the road; and these villages built on piles were a recurrent feature of the long run north and west to Angkor.

The most picturesque of all these villages was certainly Siem Reap, where the road approaches closest to the head of the Great Lake. More and more, the road from Kompong-Luong to Kompong-Thom plunged into patches of jungle, breaking the monotony of flat swamp and *padi* field. By Siem Reap, the jungle was predominant, though swampy still. Sunset at Siem Reap is an abiding memory, with its quiet river and as quiet life. The natives, in their pile-borne huts along the banks, seem to have found a veritable backwater of the world, where they live out their peaceful lives much as their ancestors of centuries long past must have lived theirs, undisturbed even by the recent intrusion of the western traveller. In dress and in customs they are extraordinarily unchanged, as in their dwellings, from their ancient counterpart on those friezes of Angkor which the western traveller now comes to see.

Amid those old-world scenes of a sunset calm, the yellow-clad bonzes are perhaps the most vivid and the most persistent link with the past. They are still the teachers; they are still the priests, performing Buddhist and older rites that have survived through the centuries. What must they think—what would their predecessors think—of an auto-bus full, inside and out, of passengers; of bicycles; or of our own car by the road-side leading to the temples of their gods? In actual fact—life is, after all, very prosaic—Siem Reap gave us the answer, as we left it for the last time, picturesque and beautiful in the sunrise breaking over the jungle. The village was waking and washing; and the bonzes, in a long yellow-clad stream, were going out with their begging-bowls to get their daily bread.





Banteai Kadei, a ruined temple at Angkor.

The bonze is ubiquitous in Cambodia, at least wherever there is a temple of any sort; and you will see just such a procession on any morning at Phnom-Penh, where palace and temple maintain the rites of ancient days. And so this wandering, mendicant monk brings us back to the capital, as the centre of royalty and religion, and therewith to another aspect of the 'Four Faces'. The god of four faces, one toward each point of the compass, is perhaps the most striking motif of Cambodian religious architecture, ancient and modern. But the actual name of Phnom-Penh, and the legendary account of its origin as a royal and religious seat, have a special interest of their own.

Phnom-Penh is a corruption of Phnom Don-Penh, signifying the Hill of the Lady Penh; and the legend runs on this wise. Towards the close of the fourteenth century, this good lady had her dwelling by the Mekong at the foot of a small hill. Looking out from her house one day in flood-time, she happened to see a gigantic tree held in the eddies of the river, which we have already had cause to notice. This tree had brought down in its sheltering embrace four statues of the Buddha and another of Vishnu; and here clearly were the gods of fallen or falling Angkor showing their devotee where they designed to make their new habitation. The Lady Penh has long since gone to a rest that her piety should surely have made blessed, but her hill dominates the Cambodian capital of to-day, surmounted by the dagoba that enshrines the gods of her worship.

The presence of the gods was not indeed a sure safeguard at Phnom-Penh any more than it had been at Angkor. For though it was established as his capital by the reigning king in 1434, it survived only to the end of that century, and did not again become the capital until the beginning of the nineteenth century; and it is only since 1867 that it has remained, undisturbed under French protection, as it is likely to remain, the capital of what survives of the ancient kingdom of Cambodia.

There is really nothing ancient in the buildings of Phnom-Penh. Even the dominant dagoba, seat of old

legend, is a modern thing, flanked with gardens and a small Zoo, where incidentally one of our party thought that he had at last encountered the tiger of report, only to find him caged in an alcove at the foot of the hill! The buildings of the Royal Palace, the temples—all are modern; and yet, with their peaked gables, there is a quaintness as of age, and the atmosphere everywhere is of the past in the Cambodian quarter of the city, lying very prettily in its river-side gardens, with native huts and bungalows, a striking contrast to the big, long main road of ugly European houses. The capital of to-day has two marked traces of foreign penetration—the European quarter, lying around the Phnom itself, symbol of French protection; and the Chinese quarter, lying between the European and the native, symbol, as elsewhere in Indo-China, of another form of domination.

These apart, the Cambodian quarter seems somehow to preserve the glamour—if it be in part a tawdry glamour—of the ancient Khmer glories. Without and within there is a sheen of ornament, a richness of colour that reflects something of old-time splendour. The elaborate ceremonies and the gilded pageantries of a long-lost day are still maintained, jewelled statues of ancient gods and modern kings unite the present with the past; and reverence for that past is reflected in the natives' reverence for their king and his possessions. Their king was Sisowath, an octogenarian, who was dying when we were in Phnom-Penh, dying to the strains of strange Cambodian music which we heard in the big Gate House. Before we left Cambodia, he had died, bequeathing to King Monivong his bevy of dancing-girls—the feminine élite of Cambodian nobility—his palanquins and his motor-cars, his parasols—he has one of a different colour for each day of the week—his palaces and temples, his jewels and treasures, and, most precious of them, the coronation sword welded of steel and legend two millenniums old. Tradition says that it was given to a Khmer sovereign by Vishnu himself; and to-day it is the sacred trust of the Baku—the modern representative of the Brahmin priests; for, with all the

superimposition of Buddhist rites for centuries past, Brahminism remains the official cult of the Cambodian court.

The wonder of Phnom-Penh remains the reverence of the natives for their royalty, a reverence reflected in the freedom with which all and sundry can frequent the palace precincts and see this unguarded wealth of royal splendour, lounge or worship in the welcome shade of decorated portico, or watch the ceremonies or entertainments provided for their royal master. There may be gaudy colour and tawdry gilt in the palace; but there is gold, silver and jewellery to a worth of millions of sterling, almost unguarded in effect save by this native reverence for their king and for all that is his. It is really a reverence for all the centuries of Khmer glory to which their king is heir; and the relics of that glory at its zenith have been strangely recovered from the jungle of Angkor.

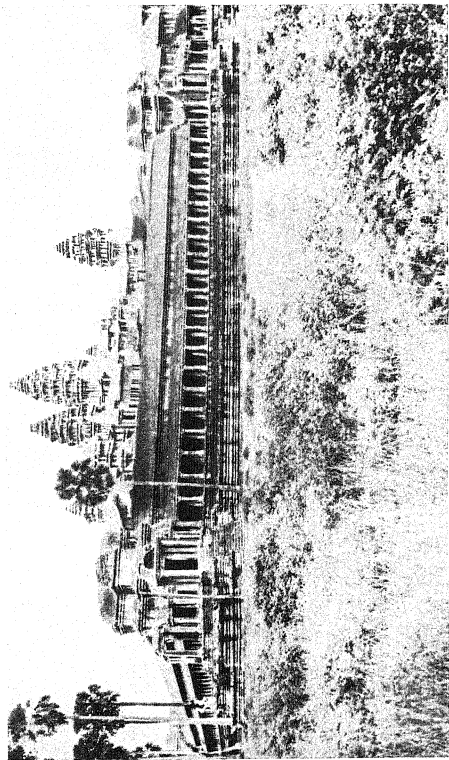
Actually, the Mandarin Road from Phnom-Penh runs south of the Great Lake some two hundred miles to Battambang and thence a further eighty miles to the Siamese frontier. To reach Angkor, it was necessary to cross by the ferry at Kompong-Luong and follow the northern road to Siem Reap, already described. Indeed it was more than a detour, as the direct jungle-road from Angkor to Sisophon near the Siamese frontier, although under construction, was impossible for cars, and we had to retrace our route to Kompong-Luong—a distance of nearly two hundred miles—to reach the frontier by the Mandarin Road, south of the Lake. In the dry season it would be possible for motor-cars to use a rough bullock-cart track between Angkor and Sisophon, as at that time there is practically no water in the various streams to be crossed, and the surface of the track is more or less dry. But in the rainy season, in which we were travelling, it was quite impossible to cross these streams, unless one were content to endure prolonged delays while temporary bridges were built or rafts constructed—delays which would actually waste far more time than was lost in returning on one's tracks to Kompong-Luong. It may be

that there is now a first-class road direct from Angkor to the Siamese frontier; the French authorities hoped to have it completed by the next dry season. If it is anything like the magnificent stretch of road covering the hundred miles of jungle from Kompong-Thom to Angkor, it will be of inestimable service to motorists and to other tourists visiting Angkor, and thereby of great benefit to the State, for financial and other reasons. At the time of our visit, an American chartered an aeroplane to fly to Angkor from Bangkok, but, owing to the impossibility of finding even landing space, he had eventually to alight at Phnom-Penh and motor thence to Angkor. Our experience was bitter enough in the few unfinished miles which we had to negotiate between Sisophon and the frontier.

Still, one feels that it would have been unforgivable, even under pressure of time, to have failed to make the pilgrimage to Angkor. Cambodia without Angkor would be like *Hamlet* without the Prince. Even the strange glamour of Phnom-Penh—modern setting as it is of what might almost be called the ghostly Cambodian kingdom—even this seemed to draw one to the seat of the Khmer's ancient greatness; and we were not disappointed.

The astonishing thing about these ruins is that, until the latter part of last century, of all this vast archaeological ensemble, only Angkor Wat¹ was known—and that only to the natives and to those few individuals who had penetrated the tropical forests of Cambodia as far as the north-western corner of the Great Lake. It is these tropical forests which swallowed and thereby preserved the Khmer buildings at Angkor, just as similar jungle has saved those of the Chams at Mi-so'n, of which mention has already been made. Angkor Wat is excepted, as it seems to have pursued an unbroken existence as a Buddhist temple, with its dependent monastery, ever since the decay of Khmer civilisation and the abandonment of Angkor some five hundred years ago. It may indeed be because the monastery has been continuously inhabited that Angkor Wat has preserved almost intact the greater part of its

¹ 'Wat' or 'Vat' is Cambodian for 'Temple'.



A corner of Angkor Wat.



wonderful structure. But this only serves to emphasise one's astonishment that such a wealth of archaeological ruins should have remained so long buried and so long unknown to the world without.

It is due to the labours of the French Government Archaeological Service that these old sites have been uncovered and a wonder of old temples and palaces brought to light as the jungle is cut down and the undergrowth cleared away. The archaeologist at present in charge of the work informed us that, in his opinion, there were many more ruins in the locality still to be discovered. Even today the ruins so far disclosed occupy an area of some twenty-five miles in circumference, which may give some idea of the magnitude of the work on which the French Service is engaged.

To my mind, the ruins of Angkor must be regarded, with those of Baalbec in Syria, as the most impressive in Asia; and the comparison suggests another thought. It will be recalled that Kinglake, in his Preface to *Eothen*—surely the greatest classic of English travel—is content to 'ruin the Ruins of Baalbec with eight or ten cold lines'; and one feels that a similar treatment of Angkor would be the most satisfactory. It would be so much easier to say nothing than to say a little; and more than a little, space forbids. Unfortunately, one cannot plead Kinglake's excuse that the ground has been thoroughly described—at least, in English. But the fact remains that it is obviously impossible to give here more than a few impressions of pictures that abide in the memory, and a recommendation to those who are interested to study the detail of these ruins in M. Commaille's elaborately descriptive and illustrated book.¹

It seems, however, somewhat a case of putting the cart before the horse to plunge, if only briefly, into Angkor's jungle of forest and stone without something of historical retrospect—a retrospect as deserved as any we have in-

¹ *Guide aux ruines d'Angkor*, Librairie Hachette et Cie., Paris, 1912.

dulged in the other countries of Indo-China, for the Khmers appear to have evolved not only a wide empire but a great civilisation, and the Lords of Angkor were, in the height of their power, the kings of no mean kingdom.

It will have appeared from what has already been said that the modern Cambodian claims to be a descendant of the ancient Khmers. These latter appear to represent a fusion of the Malaysian aborigines of Indo-China with Aryan and Mongol invaders from Central Asia. As the Cambodian to-day is, naturally perhaps, more Siamese than Annamite, so the ancient Khmer would seem to have been Caucasian rather than Mongoloid. But, whatever his origins, his civilisation was pronouncedly Hindu. Chinese records as early as the twelfth century B.C. describe a region, called Fou-nan, approximately co-extensive with the basins of the Menam and the Mekong, and apparently under Khmer control; but it is towards the beginning of the Christian era that one gets a truer indication of the trend of Khmer civilisation in the legend of a prince, Kaundinya, who came with a fleet, conquered the Queen of Cambodia and brought Brahminism in his train. The legend is symbolic of successive Hindu penetration in the latter centuries before Christ, similar to that which later pervaded the Cham kingdom to the east.

The Chinese records, which are the source of Khmer history till the sixth century A.D., show the Khmers exercising a considerable sway from a capital to the south of Phnom-Penh, with control of harbours that gave easy access to the Malay Peninsula, where Khmer suzerainty seems to have been intermittently acknowledged for many centuries. Towards the close of this period there is an interesting description of Fou-nan under her king, Java-Varman, who exchanged elaborate presents with the Ts'i Emperor of China. The king, garbed in richly brocaded sarong, bestrides an elephant; his poor subjects wear but a bare piece of cloth. All seem to live in pile-dwellings, 'good and peaceful' as far as the Chams allowed them to be. In religion, Siva is dominant, but Buddhism has already made its appeal of pity among the poor.

Fifty years later the western half of this kingdom seems to have broken away as Tchen-la; and here, in the middle basin of the Mekong, Khmer ascendancy asserted itself under a new dynasty, which first gives the country the name of Cambuja, from Cambu, its mythical founder, significantly a name of Hindu origin.

The eighth century saw this kingdom again divided; and, as a result, a Malay king's fleet sailing up the Mekong, the Khmers in flight and their king decapitated. But in A.D. 802 the tide turned. Java-Varman II., a prince of Java, began an illustrious reign of sixty-seven years, the close of which was to see Cambodia reunited and once again in control of vassal states as well as independent of Java. Although his own capitals were at Prah-Khan, Bantei-Chhmar and other places in the neighbourhood of Angkor, he was the founder of the dynasty under which the Khmer Empire reached its zenith at Angkor. The actual foundation of the royal city of Angkor Thom dates from the beginning of the next century under Yaso-Varman, whose boundaries were, in the words of his own inscription, 'Pegu, the Ocean, Champa and China'. This is, indeed, the high-water mark of Khmer rule.

A century later, about A.D. 1000, under Surya-Varman I., a Malay usurper, Buddhism attained a great hold; and it was at his orders that the Temple of Bayon was built. But it is significant that, although a devout Buddhist, he continued to pay homage to Siva. Another century, and his namesake was building Angkor Wat to the glory of Vishnu. More truthfully, he was patron to its architect, the Brahmin Divakara. For he himself was busied with successful wars over his wide empire, eastward to Champa and westward across the Menam basin, leaping, if occasion demanded, on to the head of the elephant that bore his royal foe and felling the latter with one trusty blow.

The protectorate established over Champa at the beginning of the thirteenth century under Java-Varman VII., another great Buddhist, is really the last sign of Khmer supremacy. The fourteenth century saw the rebellion of

the Tai from the Khmer yoke and their expulsion of the Khmers from the Menam basin. By 1350 the inscriptions of eight hundred years come to an end. Of these, Angkor furnished the half; and its last might well be 'Ichabod', for assuredly 'the glory had departed'. For a hundred and fifty years Angkor knew only civil strife, Cham incursion or siege by Siamese; and finally in 1505 the Cambodians abandoned to the jungle what the frequent pillage and as frequent capture of two centuries had left of the former grandeur of their greatest capital.

And to-day! Perhaps our best impressions of Angkor's buried glory was obtained not from a close examination of the individual ruins, but from the distance of Phnom Bakheng. It involved an amusing, if uncomfortable, ride up a steep and narrow jungle path, with hair-pin bends which were somewhat disconcerting to negotiate on an elephant. Its lure was not the ruined temple itself, but the wonderful view from the top of this low island hill. A great sea of forest below, and in it, here and there, we could make out dimly the stone figures, the temples and the palaces that have been swallowed up by the jungle. We seemed to have stepped straight into the old fairy tale of the Sleeping Beauty.

Individual ruins still lie wrapped in their jungle garb. Ta Prohm was, perhaps, the most wonderful for its setting of enormous trees. Lost in a huge forest, it is still possible to explore its many galleries and courtyards. But Prah-Khan is still so lost as to make exploration almost impossible because of the trees and fallen buildings. It may give some idea of its setting that my wife not only fell on an awkward piece of stone, which left its mark for weeks, but at one point crashed her head against a low stone archway, dazzled by coming suddenly into sunlight from 'the dim, religious light' of the forest. In the five basins of Neakpean, again, there was a striking example of the forest's triumph. For in the centre of the great 'tank', used as a bath by the King in ancient days, stood a small stone island with its

little stone shrine entirely overgrown by the roots of a jungle tree.

Much, of course—especially of the more imposing ruins—have been cleared; and this clearing unveils the wealth of decoration which is the main feature of Khmer architecture. There is no great skill in structural technique; but the decorative detail is astonishing alike in its perfection and in its ubiquity.

The Royal City of Angkor Thom is a wealth of architectural marvel. One recalls the approach to the gateway, the great Avenue de la Victoire, with its long double line of stone men supporting the body of a great seven-headed stone snake; the wonderful bas-relief of the Terrasse des Éléphants and the Terrasse du Roi Lépreux; the Baphuon, with its ruined tower still towering to a height of a hundred and forty feet; and the great Temple of Bayon, with its fifty-one lofty towers, every one of them bearing the four faces of Siva or Brahma, huge and imposing.

But Angkor Wat is, of all, the most impressive in its grandeur and its peace. Within an enormous moat, crossed by a great stone causeway, one comes to this temple, covering many acres of land and surrounded by an enormous stone wall broken by beautiful gateways with pointed towers. Inside there is a grassy, open space, and then the main building, with great carved galleries illustrating stories from Brahmin and Buddhist lore. In the centre is the high tower, with its many steep steps, and at the four corners some beautiful, but not large, statues of the Buddha, one of which has the most marvellous expression of serenity, another a smile as enigmatic as that of the Mona Lisa.

A thunder-storm delayed us for a space, but finally we reached the Temple and climbed to the top of the three great stories of the stone central building. There is a very peaceful and beautiful shrine in the centre—and a lovely view from this high vantage-point. Then, as we returned at sunset, we heard the strains of the bonzes chanting in their monastery, as and where priests have chanted through so

many centuries of glory and decay in this spot, wonderful still, and even awful in its atmosphere of calm and purity.

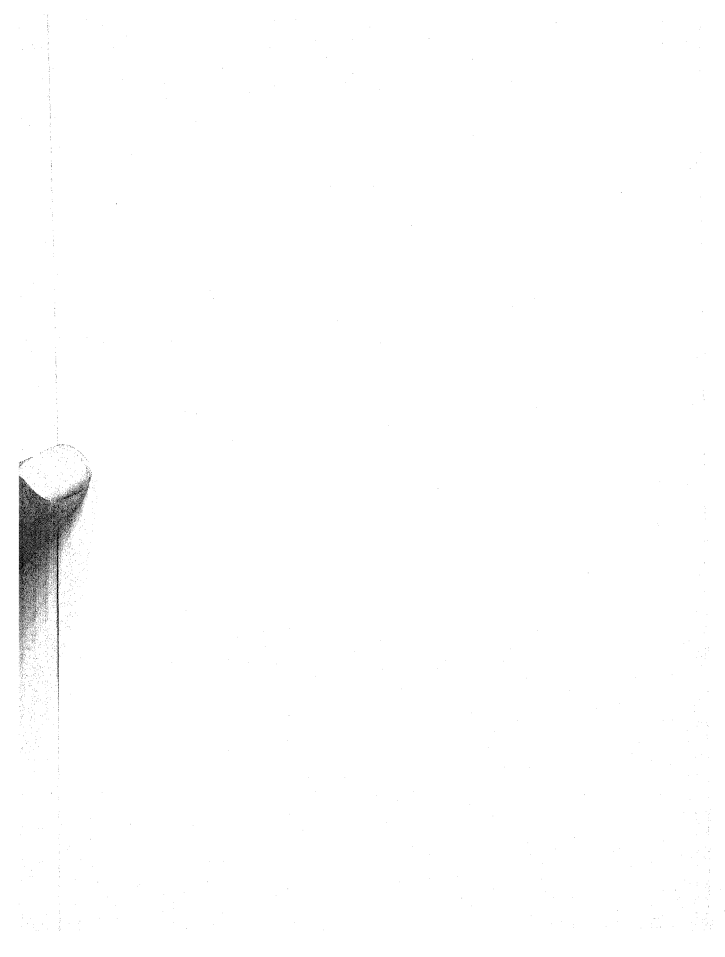
One last impression of Angkor Wat—and that by night. On the terrace outside the great gateway of the Temple some forty small boys, lightly clad, squatted in a circle, holding rush-light torches and smoking native cheroots. Within this circle of flame danced a bevy of Cambodian maidens, arrayed in the picturesque costume and head-gear of long-lost ages, and interpreting in their graceful and rhythmical postures one of the old legends of the Brahmin faith. It seemed, indeed, that the stone-carved figures of the great frieze had come to life; the garb, the attitudes of these modern girls, were a very replica of the 'Apsaras' of the Temple walls, the dancer of the Hindu paradise. The strangeness of their expressive posturing and expressionless faces was enhanced by an unrehearsed effect of eeriness produced by great flashes of heat-lightning and the roll of distant thunder.

One would like to leave Cambodia with that strange scene of ancient ritual in its Temple setting as a last vivid impression bridging the gulf of centuries. But perhaps its impression will be the more picturesque by contrast, if we follow, in conclusion, the prosaic road that leads from the Khmer City of Angkor Thom to the French *résidence supérieure* in the European quarter of Phnom-Penh.

New capitals did not save Cambodia. After a century of Siamese interference and oppression, she seems to have sought refuge in matrimonial alliance with the rulers of Hué. This, as we have seen, led only to Annamite interference and annexation; and throughout the eighteenth century Cambodia is little less than the scene of a struggle between Siamese and Annamite for the mastery of the Indo-Chinese peninsula. Her southerly provinces in Cochin-China were lost to Annam, only to pass later into the hands of the French; her easterly provinces were lost to Siam, and recovered, under French protection, only at the beginning of this century. In 1847 Ang Duong, sorry



Cambodian Dancers in front of the façade of Angkor Wat.



heir to the relics of the ancient kingdom of Cambodia, was crowned by representatives of his two suzerain lords of the east and the west.

That is the end of Annamite authority in Cambodia. Thenceforward Annam was occupied with persistent, if unsuccessful, resistance to French penetration. But Cambodia had still two lords. In 1864, after various preliminary missions, Norodom was crowned king at Udong before French and Siamese representatives; and it was significant that it was the Frenchman who placed the crown on his head.

The protectorate then established, and confirmed by a convention twenty years later, did not become a reality without some years of native opposition and consequent reprisals. The southern provinces remain part of the French colony, although, with the recovery from Siam of Battambang, Sisophon and Siem Reap, Cambodia is now mistress of the scenes of her former glory. But the ghost of the Lady Penh looks down from her ancient Phnom not on native Cambodian scenes, but on the *résidence supérieure* of a Power of whom she had never heard. Perhaps the Cambodian is too easy-going or too weary with centuries of ineffective struggle against his neighbours to think of further resistance to this foreign intruder. Perhaps, in his gentle laziness, he sees in this intrusion the surest road to the serenity which he seems to love—a serenity to which we may leave him in the hope that he may still keep it undisturbed by *corvée* or the responsibilities of democratic enlightenment.

CHAPTER XI

NO THOROUGHFARE TO INDIA

Itinerary: (by road) Sisophon, Aranya; *(by rail)* Bangkok, Haad Yai; *(by road)* Singgora, Alor Star, Butterworth, Penang, Taiping, Ipoh, Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Seremban, Malacca, Johore Bahru, Singapore; *(by sea)* Penang, Rangoon, Calcutta.

Swamped in Siam

BATTAMBANG marks a stage of transition both in our journey and in this account of it. Eighty miles beyond, we were to leave the Mandarin Road—over which we had run nearly eighteen hundred miles from La Porte de Chine—and therewith Indo-China itself. So it was at Battambang that we said farewell to Mai, our Annamite guide; and it is only fitting to make our acknowledgment here to our other guide—unfailing, if unseen—M. Madrolle,¹ without whom it is scarcely possible to make an intelligent journey through Indo-China as traveller or author. At the same time, we were leaving a country much less known than those which we afterwards traversed, a country on which we have for that reason ventured an amount of informative digression that space renders as impossible as it is unnecessary in the succeeding record of the rest of our journey. It would be an impertinence to be similarly didactic on ground already exhausted by experts; and the account becomes only naturally a record of a traveller's fleeting impressions and motoring experiences, as these latter became more and more a vivid part of the journeying.

It was at Battambang that our troubles of actual

¹ Guides Madrolle, *Indochine du Nord*, 1925; *Indochine du Sud*, 1926, Librairie Hachette, Paris.

journeying began. My wife had contracted a fever, induced possibly by a touch of tropical sun in the exposure of crossing the ferry at Kompong-Luong. To avoid delay, our expedition separated for the first and only time, the engineers going ahead from Battambang in the four-seater car to prospect the road, which we knew to be in bad condition on either side of the Siamese frontier. At night we had word from them that the road was certainly bad, but that they hoped to get through; and next morning a telegram that they would await us at the frontier.

At that we started, and, after skirting Sisophon—which it is actually unnecessary to enter—we plunged along a marsh-flanked causeway into terrific tropical rain, which eventually forced us to shelter. The road after weeks of rain was very wet; and it was under such conditions that we had to negotiate the last nine kilometres of Mandarin Road, which were actually in process of construction. If we left the alignment of the road-to-be, the car was over into deeper swamp; and the ideal was to keep the right-hand wheels on the road-makers' decauville track, which provided the only decent purchase of any sort. Various obstacles—decauville-trucks, a foundered steam-roller, a huge broken-down motor-lorry—forced us off the decauville, and it was no easy job to get back from the swamp. Piles of loose metalling along the track added to our troubles, as the car could not clear them; and progress became possible only by inches with my wife steering, while I removed stones and pushed. At one point we gave a helpful tow to another car stuck in the mud, only to need a repayment in kind a little later; but when the tow-chain broke we took care to let the other car carry on rather than risk the task of restarting it. Still, we survived the bad stretch, and came at last to the Siamese frontier, to find a little collection of thatched and grass-fringed huts in damp jungle—but no engineers.

It looked as if we should have to spend the night there—exactly where, we could not imagine—but, after some palaver with the natives, we persuaded a crowd of coolies to come with us, to pull us through difficult bits, from the

frontier to the rest-house at Aranya. We abandoned as hopeless the *terrassement* of the road under construction from the frontier to railhead at Aranya, which was as well, as we learned later that the engineers had tried it in their car, and stuck badly. Our only alternative, therefore, was the bullock-cart jungle-track through swamp. In dry weather it might be easier, but the heavy rains made terrible going, as it was little else than an alternation of holes or tree-stumps. Playing a lone hand, so to speak, we were in further difficulty, as it was impossible to unload and so travel light. At the start we had to negotiate a water-logged nullah—if that is not a contradiction in terms. In effect we slithered down it; and then, with Trojan pulling and pushing—four coolies on each of the two ropes and six at the back—with myself letting the engine do its utmost on first speed at the critical moment, and shouting like a Cape-cart driver at his oxen, we emerged from the nullah triumphant. After following the jungle-track for some time, pushed and pulled or at times under the car's own power, we came out on a jungle-clearing, which meant only that the true track was no longer clear. In time, however, we saw the welcome lights of Aranya huts; and Williams approaching across the swamp, with a torch to guide us to the rest-house, and with an inquiry for Lovell's whereabouts. It afterwards transpired that the latter, instead of awaiting us at the frontier as arranged, had returned by another car to Battambang counting on meeting us somewhere on the road. In actual fact he must have been in Sisophon itself, to shelter from the rainstorm, at the moment when we skirted it that morning.

The following day Williams and I had a strenuous morning in loading the cars on to trucks for which we had previously telegraphed from Battambang, on learning that, in the rains, other transit to Bangkok was out of the question. A strenuous morning, even with coolie help, as this lading involved haulage of both cars and their loads over half a mile of morass. The delay meant, too, that we had to wait until the next morning for the Bangkok train—no luxury in a railway rest-house for my wife, whose

fever had broken out again as a result of her ordeal of the previous day. Our only consolation was that, under our load, we had weathered the journey to rail-head. Those six miles of Mandarin track took us more than two hours; and the four and a half across the frontier another hour and a half, with our coolies' help. The engineers spent nine hours on this latter stretch. They had attempted the *terrassement* and were without coolies; but they had risked off-loading at the frontier, leaving their baggage in charge of a native chauffeur and collecting it later in two journeys by bullock-cart.

Next morning we were ready to entrain for Bangkok, having left money and instructions for Lovell, when he suddenly appeared in time to make the journey with us. Not unnaturally he slept through most of that journey, as his misadventure had landed him back at Battambang with only sufficient funds to return by native bus to Sisophon. From there he had had to tramp the forty odd miles to Aranya, which no native driver was willing to risk again with a car after the experiences of the previous day. He had to make his journey, snatching a few hours' sleep in a road-side grass hut and barely breaking fast—and this in a climate that would be trying in the ease and comfort of a car. It was indeed a travel-worn and mud-bespattered party that emerged from the train at Bangkok to the wondering gaze of an interested Press.

My first ploy at Bangkok, however, was to avoid publicity and have my wife taken to a nursing-home, as she was in a high fever by the time of our arrival. My next was to report at the British Legation; and this, owing to the kindness and hospitality of Mr. Sydney Waterlow, the then Minister, resulted in my moving from our pre-arranged hotel to the comfort of his house in the Legation, where my wife joined me as soon as she was fit to leave the nursing-home.

We were still hoping to be able to travel north or west across Siam, partly by train but as much as possible by road. So my days were spent on inquiries thereanent, in which I received great assistance from officials of the

Siamese State Railways, a Government organisation with a substantial percentage of British staff, particularly from Mr. Gibb, an English engineer, who very kindly gave us the benefit of his expert knowledge of the hinterland, and from agents of the various 'Teak' firms, whose work made them especially conversant with the country that we were endeavouring to penetrate. These inquiries, however, dispelled any hopes of an overland route into Burma at that season of the year. As, on reaching Rangoon by sea, our renewed attempts to find an overland route westward were similarly abortive, it will be more convenient to consider the question of routes both into and out of Burma together, when our account brings us to Rangoon at the close of the chapter.

In effect, from the point of view of motoring, especially in the rainy season, we found Siam, literally and figuratively, a 'wash-out'. The rail journey to Bangkok brought us from the Mekong basin into that of the Menam; and the country seemed little else than an expanse of water, in which only the buffaloes could feel truly at home. The natives everywhere were housed in huts, built on piles some three or four feet above water-level, living *en famille* on their verandas with their chickens, cattle even, and I know not what other of their animals. The sampan was ubiquitous, giving place to junks where the canals or rivers were big enough. Some fifty years ago this would have been entirely true of Bangkok itself; but just as, in approaching it, we saw more and more of roads constructed as feeders to the railway, so, in the city of to-day, well-paved and metalled streets have been built across the countless waterways on which the population used to live.

Our quarters were in themselves evidence of the recent growth of Bangkok. The old Consular estates in the heart of the city became increasingly valuable and were eventually sold; and to-day the British Legation is a spacious compound in the new part of the town. In lieu of the old-fashioned tropical bungalow that is so often the residence of a British representative in the East, the

Minister here has a palace of a house in beautiful grounds; his second-in-command has his own residence, and altogether there is an unusual atmosphere of wide-spaced freedom. The cool luxury was a welcome change from the heat of congested hotels, which, however magnificent, always seemed oppressive. That of our choice in Siam, where the engineers stayed, was certainly magnificent; it was not long since one of the royal palaces of Siam!

Not far from the Legation compound were the equally palatial grounds of the Royal Bangkok Sports Club, the rendezvous of the many British and other foreign officials of Bangkok. There is indeed much of Western culture in the Siamese officialdom of Bangkok. While there, we had the pleasure of taking tea with Prince Damrong, a distinguished Siamese gentleman, uncle, I believe, of the King. He gave us charming presents and a wonderful tea, cooked by his daughters. One of these, Princess Damrong, had had a completely Western education and spoke good English and French. Her father, too, prided himself on having paid a visit to our country and having been received by Queen Victoria. Withal they were still Siamese; and this daughter had been her father's great companion and help in collecting and arranging a Siamese Museum which she took my wife to see.

Bangkok itself had a wealth of native interest—in the water-life of its canals; in the wares, especially of silks and metal-work, which we found marketed in the picturesque and crowded streets of the old quarter; in the quaintly twisting gables of her many 'Wats', which seemed to be not unnaturally an elaboration of the Cambodian; and in its unique music which we were fortunate to have an opportunity of hearing from the King's band. Of the native drama, equally unique, if reminiscent also, like so much else, of the Tai's mistress, Cambodia, we saw nothing, as it is presented only at set seasons of fair.

Siam, as previously emphasised, has concentrated on railways at the expense of roads. The service is excellent in its efficiency and comfort. On the train from Bangkok, we slept in comfortable bunks, and bathed and fed luxuri-

ously. The organisation is, one might conjecture, seventy-five per cent. Siamese, quite twenty per cent. British, and the balance French, American and Italian. Roads, on the other hand, exist mainly as feeders to the railway system. There is a stretch from Lampang in Northern Siam running a hundred and fifty miles north to Xieng-Rai; it was constructed especially for the use of the King on a northern tour of his dominions. There are the stretches which we were able to use from Haad Yai Junction to Singgora and southward to the Malay frontier. But, for some reason or other, they are not kept in very good repair. They seemed to us, too, constructed for appearance rather than for permanence. To-day, you may get an attractive-looking surface of gleaming chalk; to-morrow—or comparatively soon—its superficial glory will have gone, only to reveal the absence of any permanent foundation of real roadway. In this, Siam contrasts to great disadvantage with Indo-China or Malay, where road construction is on expert lines designed for permanent utility.

The most practical comment on Siamese roads is obviously that we had to make our digression into Malaya, in order to ship from Penang, as the only means of access to Burma, and that, even to reach Malay, we had to entrain as far as Haad Yai Junction, a distance of over five hundred miles.

A Digression to Malaya

Our rail journey over, we had a brief but pleasant respite from travel at Singgora, where we enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. Hogg, the British Consul, in his delightful house near the sea. Singgora is a beautiful spot at the southern end of the Tale Sap, an inland sea. Founded by Chinese pirates, it is now the peaceful seat of the Viceroy of the southern provinces; and our lasting memory of it is of a lovely walk along the beach in the cool shade of casuarina trees, with the wonderful blue of lagoons set off by the extraordinary whiteness of the sands.

At Haad Yai itself we got an insight into the potentialities of Southern Siam in conversation with an old

Australian and a Dutchman, who were but two of the many prospectors who come to Southern Siam, as to Malaya, to find a fortune, or failure, according to their luck in striking tin or some other mine of wealth. Concession-hunting in Siam would seem to be an international hobby of increasing scale.

Here at last we took to the road again, and thereby to the Siamese frontier. Our route entered British Malaya through Kedah and its capital, Alor Star, the centre of a great rice-growing area, although there was already ample evidence of Malayan rubber in mile upon mile of plantation. Kedah is one of the four Non-Federated States of the north, long under Siamese suzerainty, a suzerainty largely exercised by British officials and definitely ceded to the British Government twenty years ago. South of Kedah we came to Wellesley Province and so to Crown Colony proper, which we encountered again on crossing to Penang Island, and farther south, on recrossing to the mainland, in Malacca and once more in Singapore.

We reached Penang by the regular ferry from Butterworth, which presented little difficulty for cars, although on one crossing the two-seater and I were in a lighter towed by a steam-tug, and my wife was thankful to see us safely over, as the passage was fairly rough and she was terrified that the lighter would capsize. Penang itself is a delightful spot, the prettiest that we had yet seen. The island runs up to a steep hill in the centre, while the road round it keeps much of the time near the sea, broken by a low hill through plantations. But, pretty as the shore road is, the real joy of Penang is the view from its hill-top reached by a sort of funicular railway—'Areca-nut Island' lying immediately beneath in its blue girdle of sea, and eastward across that girdle the changing greens of the thick jungle of the mainland against the misty mauve of its mountainous background.

Penang, of course, was our nearest port for Burma; but, having come so far south, we decided to go on to Singapore, where we could catch the same boat to Rangoon, especially as we had an opportunity of visiting

friends on a Selangor estate. So we made south from Butterworth to the frontier of Perak, by mangrove swamp or rubber plantation, by swamp-palm or coco-nut, through villages picturesque with their palm-leaf huts and coolies gaily dressed, cattle with lacquered horns drawing the quaintly thatched bullock-carts. At the frontier itself we had to negotiate an alarming pontoon bridge across the boundary river of Krian. Safely over, we were soon leaving the sea-flats altogether and climbing through a cutting in the rocky top of a jungle hill that brought us eventually to Taiping—and tin.

Although Taiping itself is a place of beautiful bungalows, it is the centre of the great mine-field which first drew the Chinese years ago. Its name of 'everlasting peace', which we have met in an earlier chapter and a more northern setting, is scarcely a reflection of its history; for it has never been left in peace. The mine-field became a battle-field; and, when the Chinese were not warring with the soil, they were warring with each other. And even with the advent of the British, and Taiping's new status as capital of the Federated State of Perak, the alluvial soil has been disturbed time after time in search for tin; and still, on our journeying, we saw dredgers at work, which meant that the alluvial deposits turned so often had been found to be but the surface yield of a store lying far deeper. That, we found, is typical of much of Malaya.

But at Taiping we were still a day's run of two hundred miles from the Selangor River Estate, where we saw best the working of the great Malay products of rubber, tin and palm oil. It was a wonderful run. Through lovely country of hilly jungle—with glorious views of the high hinterland which we were skirting, and, in especial, of the sugar-loaf of Gunong Pondok—we came down to the Perak River by the beautiful town of Kuala Kangsar. Here the old wooden Council Chamber of Perak lies symbolically under the shadow or—one might better say—shelter of the British High Commissioner's residence. The Perak here is very wide and liable to flood; and its crossing was a worse ordeal than that over the Krian, as here we had to

negotiate a vast floating bridge of cylindrical drums, over which we literally switchbacked on first speed, expecting the roadway planking to give way beneath us, as we sagged between the cylinders.

Still, we came safe to terra firma, and then, by a twisting road fringed to the east with rocky hills, down to Ipoh and the tin of the Kinta Valley. Our chief interest in Ipoh lay not in its modern industry, nor in its up-to-date 'urbanity', but in the extraordinary formations of the limestone hills which we passed to the north and still more to the south of it. Blue mountains behind, wooded rocky hills, rock caves of stalactite and stalagmite formation, with houses, shops and shrines in the rock—there you have the picture set in a jungle that filled the clefts in the rocky hillside. Then tin and ugly mining villages, relieved only by picturesque women-coolies in Chinese-red head-scarves and big pointed hats. It was the actual country affected by the mines that was hideous, for the hills were still lovely; and soon these predominated again, until almost unbroken and overawing jungle brought us to Tanjong Malim. It is in that jungle that you get the true gutta-percha of Malaya, and incidentally a Government 'reserve' at Trolak to rescue it from early extinction at the hands of native extravagance.

After crossing the Bernam into Selangor State, we ran by a twisting jungly road into a tremendous thunderstorm, and, after an imperative delay therefrom, into Kuala Kubu with the road nearly under water. It was certainly the worst storm that I have ever experienced, and the roads were literally turned into torrents in a very few minutes. After our experience, we were not surprised to learn that the little town, picturesque as it is, has suffered seriously from the inundations of the Selangor River, which gives its name alike to the Federated State through which it runs, and to the great Estate which we entered by a jungly, hilly road some forty miles afterwards.

If our road to the Estate had been interesting, our visit was far more so under the kindly hospitality and expert guidance of our friend, Captain Gard'ner, the manager of

this vast concern. It is impossible here to give more than a passing impression of that interest.

Tin, of course, has been for centuries the staple product of the Malay; there are still traces of ancient mines, worked—it is thought—probably by our old friends, the Cambodians, in days when Khmer power stretched far south into the peninsula, and only abandoned, perhaps, when the water obtained a hold which they do not seem to have discovered how to stem. But, by a journey that should surely rank high in travel interest, a South American rubber-tree wandered, so to speak, from Para to Penang by way of Kew Gardens and Colombo; and, through great tracts of Malaya, and especially in Selangor, the bare profits of coffee planters gave place to the great dividends of rubber companies.

So it came that, on the Selangor River Estate, we visited the rubber factory, and then from another point of the jungle walked along 'tee-tee' through miles of hot jungle, with masses of bluey-green fern climbing from under the trees. The 'tee-tee' bridges were exhausting and slippery to manoeuvre, especially in an atmosphere of extraordinary heat, in which our clothes quite literally clung to us.

In the middle of the jungle we came to a place where Captain Gard'ner's men were boring for tin, and watched great big Chinese coolies sinking a shaft and getting up samples of mud, which was washed in shallow pans, by women-coolies, to collect the grains of tin. It was really queer to watch the coolies going round with a sort of rhythmical motion as they wound their steel-rod, section by section, round and down, round and down, in a kind of devil-dance as it seemed, the weirder from their stance on a platform, where they revolved as it were in mid-air. To-day, of course, there is a wealth of mining machinery and methods of the most modern western types; and yet that vision did not seem, as indeed it is not, a very far cry from the days when the Chinese prospector consulted the local Malayan wise man, and tin-divining was the acknowledged function of his wizardry.



'Tee-tee' in Malayan jungle near Kuala Selangor.



Finally we went on to the palm-oil factory of the Hopeful Estate; and there, apart from the elaboration of processes, you have the product which, with his piece of *padi*, has given the Malay or his predecessors their easy livelihood for hundreds of years, long before the soil was turned for tin, and centuries before Para rubber reached Penang. Here, our main interest perhaps lay in comparison and contrast with West Africa, where, in our experience, native labour and primitive processes played so much greater a part than they do in so developed an estate as that which we visited in Selangor.

The peace and prosperity of these estates bridge the forty miles to Kuala Lumpur, administrative capital of the four Federated States. For there the secret lies. Fifty, even thirty years ago, such peace and prosperity could not have been. The Malay kris was too often in use; the pirate of Malay prau or Chinese junk had too often the upper hand; the native Sultan was too often despotic or vacillating; the Chinese immigrants too often faction-ridden among themselves. But to-day, British-protected and administered under British Residents, the Federated States can enjoy a peaceful and prosperous development; and the same applies to the other Malay States, non-federated but British-protected under Advisers, and, of course, to the British territory of the Colony of the Straits Settlements itself. What is the best proof of such a claim? Surely it lies not only in the remarkably prosperous development of Malaya, but in the growing permanence of the immigrant Chinese population, and still more in the steadily increasing influx of Malaysians themselves. Chinese capital and Chinese labour have always been the basis of the commercial development of Malaya. They still are. But the great extension of the rubber industry under the security of British protection has brought to Malaya, as a counterpoise to Chinese predominance, not only the thousands of Tamil labour, but this significant influx of Malays drawn from other Malayan lands.

The revenues drawn from this abnormally rapid development of the country's natural resources have, under

this protection, been diverted to the benefit of the country, in a steady growth of public works; roads to some extent, railways and buildings, and, chief perhaps of these last, schools of British model, where the natives of the country learn the first principles of self-government, and therewith that self-control in which their old rulers were so lacking.

Of the preservation of the true Malay we had best evidence on going south into Negri Sembilan. Another of the Federated States, it is in itself the survival of a strange federation of Nine States, as its name implies; and at Remban, we were informed, you find the purest of Malayan communities, with a system of inheritance through the female—and that practically entail. Our recollection is of a valley, with rice again predominant amid swamp, coco-nut and areca palms, the native women a splash of gay colour against the background of their picturesque palm-thatched houses.

At Tampin, on the frontier, we diverged to Malacca Town. There you have an epitome of European settlement in the East. It is in fact one of the oldest of such settlements. Founded by the Malays, it was captured by the Portuguese under Albuquerque more than four hundred years ago, only to pass to the Dutch a century later, and finally to the British a century ago. The old fort—or what the British left of it—and the old church of Dutch origin still look down on the small quaint town of narrow streets, picturesque in their variety of houses, of which no two seem the same. The last chapter of its history is that its houses are inhabited by wealthy merchants of China.

Malacca Town provided another experience which the traveller feels bound to record. We stayed at the new Government Rest House, which was almost entirely filled with residents of Malacca. In fact, the engineers, after searching for impossible quarters in a native hotel, were as a great favour given beds in the barber's shop in the Rest House! Similarly, the garages attached to the Rest House were filled with cars belonging to European residents in Malacca. It seemed to us strange that the permanent residents could not find permanent accommoda-

tion and leave the Rest House available for *pukka* travellers. In this connection one feels compelled to point to the contrast with Indo-China, where our experience of travel comfort was the very reverse. In fact, contrary to expectation, we found, too, that, from a motorist's point of view, the roads of British Malaya were not to be compared with those of French Indo-China. The surface admittedly was excellent on the whole, but the roads had obviously not been originally constructed for motor traffic. At that, of course, one cannot cavil. As a result, they were of a very winding nature and full of dangerous corners; and there one may cavil. Nothing had been done to ease those corners; instead of being banked inwards, they were either perfectly flat or even fell away from the curve. Further, the system of road-signs was surprisingly out-of-date. We were uncomfortably reminded of the Irish labourer who was engaged to set up Red Triangles along a dangerous stretch of Irish road. Patrick put them all at the very bottom of the hills, and, on being challenged by the inspector, ingenuously replied: 'Sure, sorr, and isn't that where all the accidents happen?' At some points in Malaya they have been omitted altogether.

The Johore frontier provided another motoring difficulty—a 'bridge for one-ton vehicles only'. Still, relying on the information of a French engineer of Indo-China, who assured us that bridges were actually tested to five times their nominal strength, we risked our load and crossed in safety. Beyond the frontier we encountered the Muar, a wide river negotiated by a steam-launch. There, waiting for the second car, we were the centre of an animated crowd, full of questions—in English—especially the numerous Chinese, who were very thrilled at the sight of our Chinese number-plates.

The end of our Malayan journey provided strange contrasts. After running through virgin forest, a jungle of enormous trees, we came down through acres of pine-apples to mangrove swamps and a wonderful sunset at Johore Bahru—thence over the causeway which connects Singapore Island with the mainland, across the Island,

and on to the brilliantly illuminated stretch of Singapore Town, a maze of traffic regulated by native police, with queer things like outstretched wings on their backs.

Of Singapore it is needless to speak. Our most vivid impressions are of the all-pervading odour of crude oil; of its polo-ponies, Australian and enormous to us, after the little ponies of China; of those quaint 'winged' police, who on one occasion were like to make trouble about our Chinese number-plates; and finally of the new Naval Base, which we had the privilege of seeing in its process of construction.

The Landward Isolation of Burma

In actual fact we reached India by boat to Rangoon, calling at Penang, and thence by another boat to Calcutta, after a week of vain endeavour to find an overland route out of Burma. As our attempts to find a thoroughfare from Siam to India were an integral part of our journey, and as the question of possible routes may not be without interest, they are treated here in an appendage which can be conveniently omitted by any who are not so interested, especially if they are scared of a map, which once again becomes essential to intelligibility.

There are two direct overland routes between Siam and Burma, by one or other of which it was hoped that we would be able to pass.

The former involved rail from Bangkok to Savankalok in Northern Siam. Thence, a bullock-cart track crosses *padi* country to Raheng; and from Raheng there is a path across the mountains into Burma at Myawaddi. From Myawaddi there is alleged to be a motorable road to Moulmein, or, failing that, to Kyondo—east of Moulmein—whence steamboats are available for convoy to the railway opposite Moulmein. From there it would be again necessary to entrain for Rangoon.

This route has been crossed by several white men, but always on foot or pony. In the rain-season, that part of the journey between Raheng and Myawaddi is reported to be impassable even for ponies. For one thing, it is a leech-

infested region. Further, it appears that, twenty miles west of Raheng, the road becomes a mere goat-track through the mountains to Myawaddi. Often the track winds along precipitous cliff-sides where there is barely room for pack-animals to pass, even without their loads. One of our informants, a German, who had come across this route while we were going round by way of Penang, told us that for long distances at a time the track between Raheng and Myawaddi was so slight that it was almost wholly covered up by undergrowth. From all reports, subsequently confirmed, it eventually appeared that this route would be at any time of the year quite impracticable for motor-transport, although it has been the mail and telegraph route used for years by the 'Timber' firms, long before the advent of railways.

Our hopes were therefore concentrated on the second route, which ran as follows: By rail from Bangkok to Lampang in Northern Siam; thence by the good metalled road, previously mentioned as constructed for royal use, for about one hundred and fifty miles due north to Xieng-Rai, and on by unmetalled road to Xieng-Sen near the borders of Siam and the Southern Shan States of Burma; from the frontier through Hawngluk to Monglin and Kengtung City, capital of Kengtung, one of the said Shan States under the administration of the Government of Burma; westward across the Salween Valley to Mongpaw, and so to Thazi on the Mandalay-Rangoon railway; thence to Rangoon through Meiktila, Kyaukpadaung, Taungdwingy, Sattwa, Allanmyo, and Prome—on the Irrawaddy River—from which there is a first-class motor road to Rangoon.

Such was the proposed route; but the Commissioner of the Shan States, as well as Mr. Gibb, the engineer, pronounced certain parts of it to be quite impassable in the rain-season. This unfavourable report referred to sections between Meiktila and Prome, still more to the previous stretch of ninety-two miles westward from Kengtung City to the Salween valley, just west of San Maung, but above all to the earlier stretch of seventy-eight miles be-

tween Monglin and Kengtung City, which they declared to be impassable for motor-cars even at any time of the year. Caught in the wet season, we abandoned the project; and the later experience of a Frenchman who made the attempt under more favourable conditions confirmed the advice given us, as this stretch, which is mere mountain track, proved absolutely impassable even with his car taken to pieces.

So much for the route—or absence of route—into Burma. Having reached Rangoon by boat, we were equally unable to get information of any westward route overland to Calcutta, either direct or by way of some more northerly part of India, in spite of valuable help from the officials of the Burma Government Roads Department.

Personally I had hoped to be able to motor from Rangoon to Prome, and from there cross the mountains to Akyab, from where we might strike a coastal track to Chittagong. Information showed, however, that, even in the dry season, my scheme was impracticable, as the whole of that coast is intersected by an almost continuous series of enormous estuaries, which would involve as continuous a construction of rafts. Of course, it would be feasible to embark one's car on the steamers that ply weekly from Rangoon to Chittagong by way of Akyab; but one would have to bear in mind that Chittagong has not the loading facilities available at Calcutta, and the car has to make a perilous overside debarkation into a lighter.

Once in Chittagong, I knew that it would be possible to go overland to Calcutta, partly by rail, if not altogether by road. For this section, the Automobile Association of Bengal gave the following as a possible, if rather difficult, route for motors: From Chittagong to Comilla; by rail to Ashuyan; by ferry over the Megna River to Bhairab Bazar; thence by road to Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Bogra, Rampur Bolliā; thence across the Ganges and south to Calcutta.

With shipment necessary, we decided to take boat to Calcutta; and it was only after arrival there and in making investigations at the Survey of India Office that I evolved

the following route, along which it seemed that it might be possible, in the dry season only, to take a motor-car. West to East the route is as follows: from Calcutta through Dinājpur to Gauhāti, north of Shillong; thence by the Assam trunk road to Golaghat; then, by way of Dinapur, Kohima—in the border mountains—and Imphal, the capital of Manipur, to Palel, on the Burma frontier, and Sattaung on the Chindwin river. Here one could embark one's car and descend the river to Monywa, whence there is a railway, if not a possible road, into Mandalay. From Mandalay it is possible to motor to Thazi, and thence reach Rangoon by the route mentioned in considering ways into Burma.

A great part of this route would have been quite impossible in the wet season; but, even in the dry, the recent experience of an Australian has proved that, if possible, it is scarcely practicable in a reasonable sense of the term. The doubtful part of the route to my mind was the stretch of sixty-nine miles from Palel to the Chindwin river; but, in a report issued at Calcutta, I suggested that, with a little patience and hard work, it might be possible to take a car through. The Australian certainly found need of patience and hard work. He literally had to cut his way through jungle-bush, and those sixty-nine miles took thirty-six days to accomplish! And, in the end, working eastward, he had to ship from Rangoon to Penang.

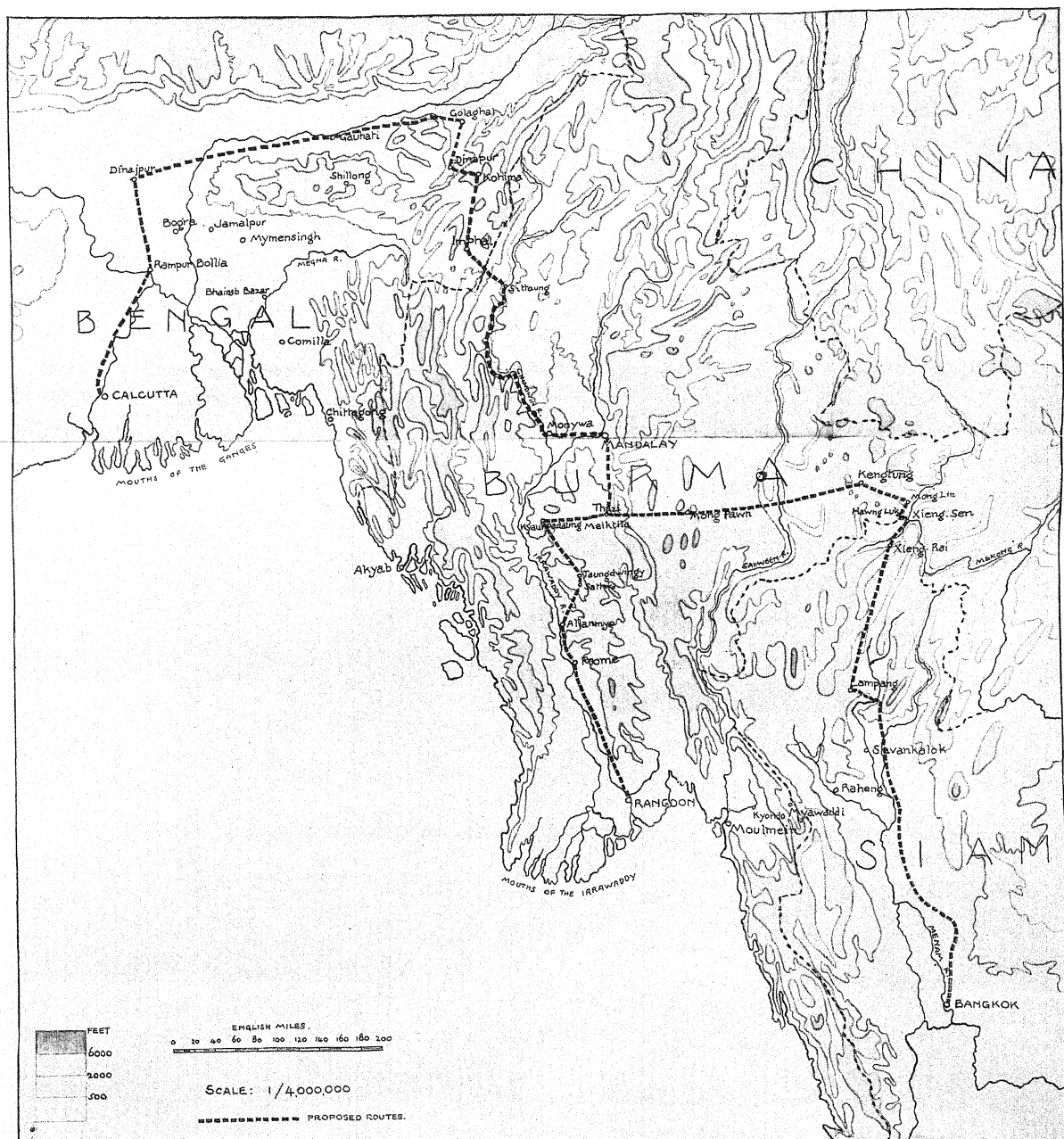
In the light of our own experiences and advices, still more in the light of the subsequent attempts of the Frenchman coming west and of the Australian going east, it may not unreasonably be claimed that, under present conditions, Burma very definitely denies the motorist a thoroughfare from Siam to India.

Apart from vain route-searching, which took most of our time in Rangoon, we had difficulties in getting a permit to take our fire-arms into India—really unnecessary trouble, as Simla had telegraphed sanction. Things were further complicated through my having a touch of fever.

Still, we contrived, in spite of difficulties, to see something of Rangoon—the famous Shwe Dagon Pagoda,

enshrining some of Buddha's hairs, given, according to tradition, by the Buddha himself to the founders of the original settlement; more modern, but most typical of Burmese life, the elephants at work in the teak yards; and, for type of leisured occupation, a race-meeting, with tips given us by a little Burmese Princess, as expert in horses and their form as in her knowledge of English and English slang. It was a most pretty, park-like racecourse, with a wonderful crowd of gaily dressed Burmese—men and women—as well as foreigners. The Burmese women are enchanting in their coloured silks, attractively pretty, with flowers in their long and beautifully dressed black hair.

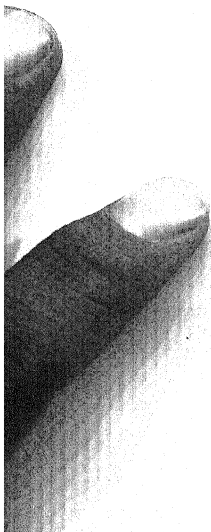
Our last experience of Rangoon was delightfully picturesque, as a friend who came to bid us good-bye brought with him his Kachin servant in the true Kachin costume of Upper Burma, bearing, too, a wonderfully embroidered bag—and a story which is quite unembroidered. A great big-game hunter himself in his native mountains, this boy had been taken the day before to the Zoological Gardens in Rangoon. He was thrilled at the sight of the wild animals. But, when he saw a rhinoceros, he burst out laughing, looked at his master and said: 'No, this not true', refusing to believe that it was really an animal, and treating this feature of his sight-seeing as some kind of practical joke!



London, 1929.

II.—Bangkok to Calcutta: route proposed for motor journey.

CHINA TO CHELSEA



CHAPTER XII

WITH 'KIM' ON THE GRAND TRUNK ROAD

Itinerary: Calcutta, Chandernagore, Govindpur, Dehri-on-Son, Benares, Allahabad, Cawnpore, Sheorajpur, Agra, Delhi, Ambala, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Lahore.

AT Calcutta we were already, thanks to rains, practically two months behind the scheduled time of our original programme; and we unfortunately incurred further delay there, as I was laid up for a fortnight with a sharp attack of dengue. This apart, the clouds of trouble seemed to have rolled over. Thanks to Army Headquarters at Simla, the various departments of the Government of India, the Automobile Associations of succeeding provinces—and, last but not least, the clerk of the weather—we found our way through India not only peculiarly free from any sort of difficulty, but one long chapter of kindly hospitality and assistance, of friendships new and renewed, and of glorious autumn weather.

We were busied in Calcutta itself with a report on our journey to that point, issued for the benefit of various friends; with necessary investigation—under the help of the Survey Department and others—of coming routes and of routes that might have been; and with arrangements for additional personnel in the shape of the native servants necessary in extended travel in India. Still, we found time for relaxation, and enjoyed particularly the enthusiasm of 'rugger' matches, in which, after the barren grounds of Northern China, we envied these players their luxuriant carpet of green.

As a newcomer to Calcutta—my wife was not—I was, personally, most struck, almost literally struck, by the

sacred bull roaming at heart's desire. It is at least disconcerting to find him, as I did, nosing into one's financial affairs at a bank counter! Edinburgh used to have a story that Rabbi Duncan collided with a cow in crossing Princes Street and absent-mindedly raised his hat, with a 'Beg your pardon, madam', and a little later collided with a lady, whom he astonished with his unexpected ejaculation: 'Is that you again, you brute? Get out!' One feels that, in Calcutta or other cities of India, his politeness to the animal and rudeness to mere humanity would have seemed not absent-minded, but natural.

From quite a different view-point, as soldier, I was perhaps most impressed by 'Mutiny' and other scenes of British campaigning. Hitherto, they had loomed rather on my mental horizon as a necessary part of examination knowledge. The bare bones of text-books became real flesh and blood in seeing the actual scenes of so many historic happenings, from the 'Black Hole of Calcutta' itself, past Cawnpore's Ghat and 'Well of Treachery', to Delhi's Memorial Tower—to mention but a few of the many, many memories awakened along the stretch of the Grand Trunk Road. It became increasingly easier to visualise our road itself alive with the troops of those many campaigns, and to picture

a regiment a-comin' down the Grand Trunk Road;
With its best foot first and the road a-sliding past,
An' every blooming campin'-ground exactly like the last;
While the Big Drum says, with 'is "*rowdy-dowdy-dow!*"—
"*Kiko kissywarsti don't you hamsher argy jow!*"

Kipling's pictures are as true to-day—of which more anon.

From the point of view of mere journeying Calcutta marks a distinct stage, in our acquisition there of additional personnel, which deserves more than the passing reference already made and marks this chapter as a substantial postscript to the third.

For a week in Calcutta we had an excellent little *chota* bearer; but, as Hindu, he would have been of little use on our leaving India, and would have provided difficulties in Mohammedan parts on the question of food and strict-

WITH 'KIM' ON THE GRAND TRUNK ROAD
ness of caste rules. Both of the bearers whom we obtained in Calcutta—with a view to the journey across India, Persia, Iraq and Syria—were Mohammedan, and, as such, able to eat the normal food of the countries through which we would be passing.

The one, Wilayet Hussein, was a dear old man from Dehra Dun, in the United Provinces. He had seen active service in many a frontier campaign and had travelled as bearer to officers of the Survey Department, through whom we got hold of him. He was to act as our cook and as personal servant to my wife; and indeed his skill in turning out wonderful hot stews under conditions that looked most unpromising was equalled only by his ability as interpreter to the party and by his devotion to my wife. Even on the night after his arrival in Calcutta, when my wife had as yet hardly realised his existence, she went to the door of her room to try to get the hotel bearer to fetch something, and to her astonishment the figure of Hussein rose from the passage at her feet. Rumour had reached him in the servants' quarters that his Sahib was ill, and he had brought his rug and lain down by our door in case he should be wanted.

The other servant was a young Pathan who had already served nine years with the colours in the Indian Army and had seen much service in Mesopotamia, Egypt and France. He was very proud of his many medals, but prouder still of his race and did not hesitate to let us know it. He was sent to us by a Customs official in Calcutta whom he had served as personal servant on occasions when he was down river catching smugglers. He must have been useful for such work, for, like all his fellow-tribesmen, he was a fine stalwart fellow. But, like them too, he had a very hot temper which at times seemed likely to land the expedition in unpleasant incidents. His fits of temper soon passed, however, and he would be his cheery self again, swaggering along with a firm belief in his superiority to anyone else in India. Babuzai Khan was his name, and it might well be thought that he was too superior and lordly to demean himself by hard labour. Far from this, however,

whenever there was anything to be done or any difficulty to be overcome, it was Babuzai who was first out of the cars, and, with his big brawny shoulders, helping to push us out of mud or sand. Indeed, he was so vigorous with shovel or pickaxe that we had often to curb his enthusiasm, as at any minute we looked to see his pick-head pierce a tyre or some other part of the car.

These two men made every difference to our journey from Calcutta to the Mediterranean, and we only trust that in future travel we may have the good fortune to secure the assistance of two so loyal and devoted servants. It was with much regret that we parted from them at Beirūt, and saw them on to the ship that was to take them back to India and their homes. There I can well envisage Babuzai Khan strutting the bazaars of his native mountain village and recounting, with a goodly intermixture of truth and gasconade, his adventures with the 'Captain Sahib'. Long may he live to tell the tale! And Hussein, I doubt not, has returned to the bosom of his family and, by his own account, is warning his progeny against the folly of motoring across the world. For, after a day of excruciatingly painful 'road' in Persia, I asked his opinion of Persian roads as compared with those of India; and he replied: 'Captain Sahib, if ever my wife bears me a son, I will take care that he never travels by motor-car over the roads of Persia'. I am afraid that there were many occasions on that trying journey when the poor old man was almost in despair as he sat curled up in his *posteen*, looking the picture of misery and almost frozen to death. Indeed, before we engaged him at Calcutta, we had doubts as to whether he would be able to support the hardships that we knew to be in store for us. In spite of his years, he stood them like a hero, even though the reality exceeded expectation, and in the most uncomfortable circumstances he never uttered a word of complaint. And—what was of great account to us—he seemed always able to produce a hot meal, when we were expecting nothing better than some hard biscuit and bully-beef. We cannot imagine that he will ever again, of his own free will, undertake a similar

WITH 'KIM' ON THE GRAND TRUNK ROAD expedition, but are sure that, as long as he lives, the young folk of his village will gather round his threshold to hear the story of his adventures with the Sahibs and their 'devil-carriage'—and 'we in it shall be remembered'. His last words to my wife were: 'Goodbye, Memsahib. I hope the Captain Sahib will soon be a General Sahib, the General of all India, and then the Memsahib can be a Lady'!

And then there was 'Kim'. The taking of Hussein and Babuzai involved, on grounds of space, a considerable sacrifice of valuable kit. But 'Kim' came in little compass, and yet he seemed a very real part of our personnel along the stretch of the Grand Trunk Road. Many were the times that we passed little groups and processions of people who might well have been Kim's old benefactress on one of her journeys. Or again a figure would ride past that seemed old Mahmud Ali, the horse-dealer, himself; and in Lahore, when trying to take a ciné-film of the gun of Zam-Zammah, we just missed the chance of 'shooting' a grubby little boy who was riding the gun exactly as though Kim had come to life again. Night after night, before we turned in to rest in the dak-bungalows alongside the Grand Trunk Road, we read and re-read Kipling's pages which every day grew more real to us.

With that masterpiece of kaleidoscope long since an open book to English readers, it seems an impertinence to attempt anything of description. For the picture is still a true one. Such a piece of modernity as our car scarcely seemed to strike a new note, but simply merged, like everything else, into that long, ever-moving procession of men and beasts.

There unfolds the long and ever-changing panorama of vegetation—great stretches of grassy plain or jungly scrub and thorn, broken by many a *gheel* and nullah; reeds and grasses of every height; *padi* and jute, Indian corn and millet, clover and veitch; ponds of white lilies and wide fields of roses, source of the fragrant attar; mustard and peppers; sugar-cane and bamboo; coco-nut, rhun and toddy palms; banana, banyan and mango;

prickly-pear of the cactus; mimosa and acacia, with the pale green of the latter a strange touch of spring amid the autumn glory of crops ripe to harvest.

But all that is background for the moving life of the road. The black water-buffaloes of Calcutta carts soon gave place to bullocks; and then the procession began—masses of bullocks and cows; draught bullocks, sometimes three abreast, drawing their solid-wheeled carts and straggling along the road when their drivers slept, or herded by the roadside in great bullock-cart encampments; camel-carts with their curious cage tops; thatch-covered *ekkas* drawn by gaily harnessed ponies, or the *tongas* of the towns; then pack-bullocks and pack-ponies; camel-caravans and donkey-caravans, picturesque with their drivers smoking hookahs; flocks of sheep and herds of strangely marked goats; some elephants; the light fawn of two gazelles in the roadside bush; a dead antelope in a car, the obvious quarry of some shooting expedition; other dead animals the final quarry of some vultures and a jackal; then, very much alive, monkeys by the hundred, with their babies, inquisitive but unperturbed by the traffic of the road.

And of humanity, a dozen, a hundred wayside pictures—a coolie-borne equipage, reminiscent of China; a wealthy landowner astride his horse, with attendant syce on a pony; a mail-runner carrying a bell-adorned stick to frighten away tigers; mendicant Buddhist monks; natives on bicycles, a strange contrast to wild Beduin-like shepherds near Lahore; impish boys making salaams or herding buffalo into *padi* fields; women on the Agra road, bright in the yellow of their dress, with masses of glass bangles of all colours, the girls with full skirts, but, in lieu of bodice, only a shawl drawn over their heads and reaching to the waist; a picturesque gipsy caravan beyond Delhi, and in particular a fine-looking woman in bullock-drawn *ekka*, striking in her red and yellow dress and wearing a big nose-ring; then a contrast of Sikh women in black, with their men black-turbaned, although at Amritsar there were turbans of every brilliant hue.

At times the women of the road perturbed poor Hussein. I remember one particular occasion when a flat tyre made us halt right under the walls of Karnal—an old city some eight miles beyond Delhi, quaint with its covered streets and beautiful houses and gates. The women watched us over the wall, very amused and friendly, as we did the needful repairs. But Hussein was rather shocked, and assured us that his woman was not allowed to show herself, unless completely covered by the orthodox white linen veil, which these were certainly not.

Karnal brings us from the movement of the road to the myriad points where man and beast make halt and habitation along its length—their mud huts and grass huts or thatched roadside camps; their villages, mud-built or of more substantial brick, roofed with thatch or tiles gleaming red in the sun; some so narrow that their dwellings seem to be in the road rather than on it; others more imposing, with temple and mosque, and picturesque with well and water-carriers, or with mango-shaded pond the centre of village life; and finally towns and the great cities of the Grand Trunk Road, every one of which could well claim a chapter, if not a book, to itself.

Our own halts were made occasionally in the hotels of the big cities, such as Benares, Agra, Delhi and Lahore; but more often in the dak-bungalows, originally established by Government as relay-stations for the mail, and thence as rest-houses for government officials and other travellers. Our earliest experience of one was on our first night on the road at Govindpur. It was a particularly pleasant one, standing in a large park, well off the road, with lovely views over undulating country. The change from the heat of Calcutta in that one day's run was as wonderful as it was welcome, the beginning of a glorious spell of sunlit days and cool invigorating nights. As of the better type, this bungalow boasted a *khansamah*, so that our bearers were relieved of cooking responsibilities, and had only to get our sleeping kit ready, the bedding, mosquito nets etc., which are an inevitable adjunct of Indian travel. A few nights later we were guests of

friends in the Worcestershire Regiment, provided with a private bungalow and supplied with food from the Mess. On other occasions we halted for lunch or the night at a type of bungalow other than the *dak*. It is known as an Inspection Bungalow, and is available for travellers, unless required by irrigation inspectors of the Public Works Department, for whom it is specifically intended. They were sometimes quite small, one especially that I recall—at Sheorajpur, some thirty miles beyond Cawnpore—only two rooms and a veranda in a little compound, extraordinarily picturesque with the firelight, from the little hut where Hussein was cooking our dinner, shining on a big mango-tree in the courtyard, where friendly dogs, chickens and cows were wandering unperturbed. Certainly Hussein at his cooking and Babuzai at our kit contributed a wealth of comfort even on this easy stage of our journeying.

And still one has said nothing of the great cities themselves. In such a welter of interest a few impressions must suffice.

Scarcely out of Calcutta, pre-eminently the city of the 'Company' that gave us India, we came to Chandernagore, a piece still strangely left to the French with whom we fought for India. At Dehri-on-Son the cars had to be put on trucks to cross by the great railway-bridge, although, in fact, we saw carts fording the wide river by sundry tracks. Next day we were crossing the Ganges by the Dufferin Bridge, with its fine view up river to the burning ghats of Benares. In this holiest of Hindu cities, with its thousand temples—and some hundreds of mosques—to which a million make pilgrimage every year, one feels cynically grateful that their dead should be burnt and that sacred Ganges has in fact some antiseptic property and a curative power that is not the mere superstition of the devotees who bathe in its waters; for the scents of Benares are as legion as its shrines.

At Allahabad one comes to Mohammedan glory; but its Great Mosque and Moslem name rather hide the fact that it is still for the Hindu a great place of pilgrimage,

the meeting of the three sacred rivers—the Ganges and Jumna, which all can see and know, and the subterranean Saraswati which is better known to the eye of faith. Again perhaps one was cynically grateful to have avoided the quarter of a million who throng its Fair and give the city its nickname of Fakirabad.

But it was at Agra that the real grandeur of Moham-medan architecture burst upon us. Babuzai was very visibly impressed, though it would have been difficult to have explained to him the best description ever given—that 'the Moguls designed like Titans and finished like jewellers'. Our rooms gave us a glimpse of the Taj Mahal, and in the early evening we saw it lovely and dreamlike in the glory of sunset.

The next day we came to Delhi by the gleaming white marble of Humayun's tomb. It bridges a big span of Delhi history, for it is the earliest of Mogul architecture, and it was in one of its dim-lit rooms that the last Mogul Emperor of Delhi took refuge, when the city fell in the year of the Mutiny. Allusion to Mutiny memories has already been made; but, though these may loom large in Delhi Fort, one cannot forget that Delhi is the site of ruined cities, nearly as numerous as those of that other plain of Troy, with a history that covers not seventy but more than seven hundred years. To-day, it is a city of contrasts. In Old Delhi we saw the great Kutb Minar, the ancient watch-tower raised in A.D. 1200 by the first of Delhi's 'Slave Kings'; and even his capital arose on the ruins of a Hindu city. In New Delhi, eighth of the line and capital of British India, we found a sort of super 'White City', with the glare of the Indian sun on it making things only a little worse. Someone not unwisely suggested that it, in its turn, would at least make a fine ruin!

Through Ludhiana, with the dust of the road pink and gold-coloured against the setting sun, as one emerged from a beautiful tunnel of trees, we came to Amritsar, with its memories of trouble later than the Mutiny. There is a square with one of its sides open to the sacred lake in which the Golden Temple is set. The square is but small,

and the approaches on its other sides narrow and dominated by high buildings; and, standing there, one could well imagine what a trap it might be for a handful of troops faced by an angry mob of mutinous natives. Amritsar is the Sikhs' Benares, and as goodly a rival in its dirt as in its devotion.

We left Kim astride his great bronze gun in Lahore, and crossed the Ravi river to Shahdara, the beautiful tomb of the great Mogul, Jehangir. His wife, Nur Jehan, one of the most amazing women in Mohammedan history, is buried near. She was a Persian and exercised a remarkable influence over her husband; for, besides being beautiful, she was extremely clever and strong-minded. Jehangir seems to have allowed her readily to manage things from behind the veil; and she was certainly the real ruler in her husband's lifetime, even at one time leading his armies—a truly wonderful woman. The great garden surrounding the vast tomb at Shahdara is laid out with beautiful grass, lawns and flowers and cypress-trees enclosed by a great brick wall; and there we found a crowd of Indian girl-students, picturesque in their *saris* of different colours, some, perhaps, to do homage to the memory of a great woman.

And here for a time we take leave of the Grand Trunk Road, and, in leaving it, cast back in memory to Phillaur, a town that lies between Delhi and Lahore. For there, in a beautiful age-red serai-fort, built by Shah Jehan, solitary but impressive amid drab surroundings, one gets a vision of the vanished glory of departed dynasties clearer perhaps than in the great cities rich with their monuments and memories; and there, as much as in the palaces of their splendour, one reads the truth of Omar's picture:

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Doorways are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his Hour or two, and went his way.

Then, for contrast, 'Kim'—and the ceaseless life of the Road.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CALL OF KASHMIR

Itinerary: Jammu, Patni and Banihal Passes, Srinagar, Baramula, Abbottabad, Attock, Peshawar.

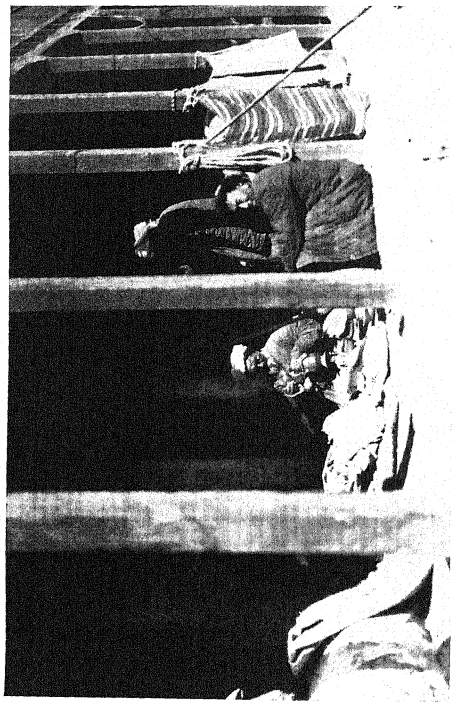
ALTHOUGH we had reached the capital at the difficult period of the autumnal Simla-Delhi re-migration of army and political officialdom, we were still able to make the necessary inquiries and arrangements for our journey to the frontier without actually having to go to Simla. We were particularly anxious to make contact with Kashmir and so with the trans-Himalayan route of our original planning, on which we were able to obtain from frontier officials and personal investigation a more intimate and practical knowledge than that afforded by our long-distance correspondence from China. So, after a run from Calcutta of some fifteen hundred miles, mainly of straightforward 'Trunk' road, we struck north to the hills, just before the Grand Trunk Road enters Wazirabad.

Beyond Sialkot Cantonments we were soon climbing into Jammu, quaint with its red-painted brick, and its fortress standing picturesque on a hill above the Chenab with a background of mountains. Beyond, we climbed still, by a tremendously steep hill with many dangerous bends, hair-pin corners every few hundred yards, with white stones down the middle of the road to keep ascending and descending traffic apart—a needful precaution, as, in less than two hours, we met no less than thirty motor-buses driven by natives, and that means at a goodly speed! By evening we were well over two thousand feet up, clustered as closely as possible after dinner around the blazing log fire of the Udampur Bungalow, and slept

under a brilliantly starlit sky—but under roof and high-piled blankets too—on this our first night in the hills.

We rose to a beautiful morning, with the hills faintly misty but the sun well up; and a day of climbing by the two great passes of Patni and Banihal brought us to Srinagar. We were soon passing pack-coolies and pack-mules, bullock-carts and camel-caravans, the first carrying curious wooden frames, the normal medium, apparently, of load-porterage in those parts. Fortunately, all slow-moving traffic must go by night or our way would have been difficult, as indeed we found it if we were on the road after six in the evening. For they seem to start then and move either along the middle of the road or on the wrong side, and are flustered by the lights of a car and extra slow in moving out of the way. By day they camp, little companies of coolies huddled over little stick fires, or great bullock and caravan encampments. Even without them the road had its difficulties—numbers of 'buses and hair-pin bends, small landslides with great lumps of rock that we had to move off the road, and frequent small wooden bridges, almost all at right angles to the road, as irritatingly as on a Yorkshire moor. So we rose to pine and fir and deodar, the setting of a lovely green meadow—like some Swiss Alp—at the summit of the Patni Pass, six thousand three hundred feet up. Then a drop of four thousand feet in some twenty miles to the Chenab at Ramban, the hill-side of our descent terraced with chestnut, ilex and poplar, and splashed with the golden orange of native corn drying on the flat roofs of mud houses, or wilder at times with an outcrop of sulphurous rock-face or the fluttering of vultures waiting for pack-animals whose journeying was done. The river itself was a wonderful streak of greenish blue against its grey rock wall, its higher bank of hill looking almost pink with grasses, and set with thickets of wild pomegranates, which Babuzai picked for us.

From Ramban we climbed, climbed, climbed to the greater Pass of Banihal, the road winding up by great traverses, with shadows falling long across the hill even by



'Journey's End' in the Kofla Serai, Srinagar.

three in the afternoon. At the top, eight thousand eight hundred feet high, we looked back over the valley beyond the great bare hills to the south. Then northward our road took us out through a long mountain-tunnel to our first view of the great flat valley of Kashmir—watered by the Jhelum and many lakes and girdled by snow-topped Himalayas, with nearer splashes of vivid autumn colour in the deep amber gold of poplars and the deeper crimson of the chengar-trees, which are so distinctive a feature of Kashmir.

Coming down, we should have halted at Munda, but the space round the rest-house was entirely occupied by a large camel caravan; again at Islamabad, but there the Maharajah of Kashmir was in camp and left us no room! So we made tracks to Srinagar, through a well-watered valley and a road that was extraordinarily beautiful, with the headlights of the cars showing up the long avenues of trees which seemed almost to run into each other as they stretched out farther and farther ahead. So at last to unexpectedly luxurious quarters in the spacious compound of Nedou's Hotel, roaring wood fires, a welcome dinner and more welcome bed after a long and strenuous, but truly wonderful, run.

If the road to Kashmir was wonderful, Kashmir itself was still more enchanting. One had always heard glowing accounts of it as a veritable paradise; and personally I was prepared to be disappointed, as one so often is in such cases. But the reality was beyond expectation and is quite beyond description.

There is the quaintness of Srinagar itself lying along the banks of the Jhelum, spanned by rustic wooden bridges, and overhung by wooden houses of five or six stories, with their sloping earth-covered roofs.

By the Seventh Bridge we came to the wonderfully picturesque scene of the Kofia Serai, the great caravan-serai for the caravans coming down from Chinese Turkistan through Yarkand and Leh. There we bought jiz-zums, silk, and queer old weapons—a bare few of the multifarious wares of this nomad merchandise.

The *serai* itself, sometimes known as the 'Yarkandi'

Serai, might have been a scene from the *Arabian Nights* with its queer Turkoman pilgrims, both men and women, bound for Mecca. They trek over the mountains for six or eight weeks to reach Srinagar. There they are packed into motor-cars, strange Western monsters that they have never seen before, and are motored down to railhead at Rawalpindi, where they entrain for Bombay, there to join the pilgrim boats for Jeddah—and so to Mecca and the satisfaction of their life's ambition. They are Chinese-looking in some ways—from a far-back cousinship—but are large, strong creatures with flat, good-tempered faces and a most healthy colouring. Men and women—though there are few of the latter—are all at that time of the year dressed in wadded coats. The centre of the *serai* was full of rough hill-ponies, and of bales of wool and other merchandise brought down from Turkistan. Round the courtyard run two balconies. On these there open rooms with padlocked doors, each of which is hired by some merchant to store his wares or his family, or both, until his return over the hills to Central Asia.

More than once we motored out to see the caravans coming in from those hills—picturesque men and even more picturesque beasts of burden, ponies, mules and yaks. The women of the caravans were terrified of the car, especially on one occasion when we overtook them, as we came back in the dusk with head-lights on. They turned their ponies off the road into the fields, shrieking with terror and covering their faces, and evidently thought that the beautiful and fertile valley of Kashmir was a far more alarming country than the grim mountain-passes that they had just left. This road took us actually to a point where a narrow suspension bridge over the river marks the northern limit to which wheeled traffic can proceed on this trans-Himalayan route. There we had to stop and could not do more than take photographs of the route up to Leh, which we had hoped so much to be descending from its farther side, with our cars in pieces on pack-ponies. The mountains looked most inviting, and we longed more than ever to go up to Leh and Yarkand.



A Kashmiri family on the Dal (Lake).

But we must leave the merchant pilgrims to their long trek, to come to what is more truly the glory of Kashmir itself. And we may come to it best by way of His Highness the Maharajah of Kashmir, to whom we paid our official respects, even if he had robbed us of our night's lodging at Islamabad! He is perhaps better known to the Western world as 'Mr. A' than as the heir to the beautiful domain that has known for rulers Scythian and Hindu princes, Tartar and Mogul emperors, Durani, Sikh and Dogra chiefs. Of these it is to the Mogul emperors, abetting Nature's beauty, that Kashmir owes the glory of her lakes, and especially to Jehangir, who more than any other chose this Eden for the pleasure-grounds of retreat and first adorned them with the changing colours of the chengar.

To see something of their beauty, we spent a day on a house-boat. These, with cook-boat towed astern, are provided fully prepared; and, quickly and comfortably settled in deck-chairs, we were poled up the canal and through the great locks that lead to a farther canal and so to the great Dal, or lake. The weather was ideal, and as we approached the Dal, past long rows of house-boats, the views were increasingly lovely, almost too lovely to be true—the great mountains rising on one side with beautiful trees along the edge of the canal, and on the other a watery plain with more lovely trees and in the distance a rocky fort-crowned hill.

Here, from time to time, we passed native boats laden with market produce going into Srinagar, their owners Kashmiri, a picturesque race of big upstanding people. The women were unveiled and very beautiful, like very dusky gipsies, with great rings in their ears and their hair done in great rings at the side. It must be admitted that, handsomer as they were than any other race that we had seen, they were incredibly dirty. It was really astounding that, so handsome, and native to surroundings so beautiful, they could contrive to be so uncleanly in their persons.

The canal gradually opened out into one small lake after another, until we were in the Dal itself and right

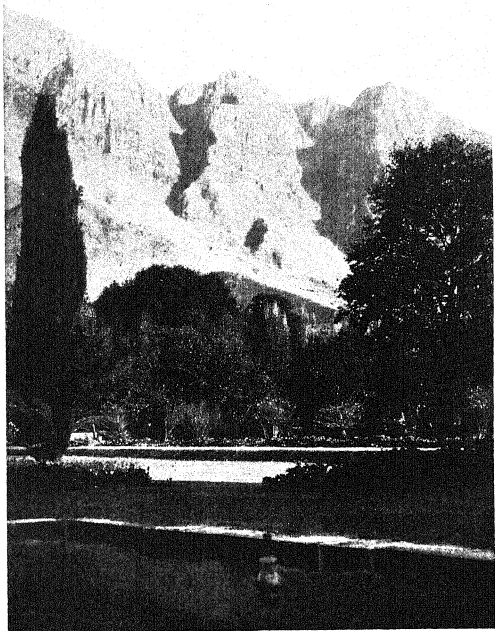
under the mountains, with the Shalimar Bagh and the Nishad Bagh lying between the mountains and the lake in the distance. These latter gardens were wonderfully beautiful—terrace upon terrace up the hill-side adorned with artificial watercourses plashing over marble slides, towering trees and, blooming underneath, a carpet of roses, dahlias and every kind of lovely garden flower. As we looked across the lake from these high terraces, we could hardly believe that anything lovelier could be; and yet the view from the bottom of the gardens up these terraces to the great trees against their background of Himalayas was perhaps even more wonderful, with autumn tinting everything to something of fairyland. Then, for final touch of magic to an enchanting day, a Persian banquet, as our boat floated homeward in the moonlight.

Does it spoil the picture, or does it enhance its enjoyment by contrast, that we arranged this day of enchantment with a creature whom we christened 'the Leech', one of those many who attach themselves to visitors in Srinagar and are more difficult to shake off than the importunate touts of Cairo or any of those places in the world where there are 'sights' to be seen or things to be 'done'? At least one feels that it would be a serious omission to leave unmentioned another so characteristic a feature of Kashmir.

One more impression before we take to the road again; and it is that of the many marriage parties which we met, both in the streets of Srinagar and on the Kashgar road, the bridegroom strangely conspicuous in the throng in that he was so young and so diminutive. But, for consideration of that problem in all its bearings, one must go to *Mother India*,¹ and its critics.

After attending the local Armistice Day Service, we left Srinagar with the snow mantle of its mountain girdle appreciably deeper than when we had come to it a week earlier, making our run through the valley to Baramula the more beautiful, as the snow had now fallen on the nearer heights. My wife was especially struck by the contrast with the setting of spring in which she had last seen

¹ *Mother India*, by Miss K. Mayo, Jonathan Cape, 1928.



The Nishad Bagh, Kashmir.



it. Then the poplars edging the roads were but faintly tipped with a yellow-green haze of young leaves, if showing leaf at all; now they were vivid in deep gold. In both seasons their silver stems stood like sentinels of the road, in autumn more solid sentinels, in spring grey silver ghosts.

We came down through the Jhelum gorge and its riot of colour to Rampur and Ghari, where we watched several 'jams' of logs which were being floated down the river, and at one point an old man skipping from log to log with an agility that belied his years. Here we had left autumn tints for the green of olive. Then, on crossing the Jhelum by the Domel bridge, we had a dangerous stretch of shale and other moraine over the Loharan Ki Gali Pass, and some stiffer climbing to Manserah and Abbottabad. It was during this, when rounding a corner in climbing to the Batrasi Pass, that we were alarmed in coming upon a motor-bus overturned in the road, with another upright a few yards behind it. No one seemed to be hurt, despite a deal of grease and broken glass in the road. The inmates of both buses then proceeded to take out all the personal luggage and merchandise from the overturned bus. It was set on its feet again—or wheels, rather—with the body-work at an alarmingly odd angle, at which, after reloading, they proceeded on their downward way, somewhat erratic and shaky, but apparently unperturbed by what seems to be a not unusual occurrence—certainly not unnatural, as they had taken their corner admittedly too fast with a bus that was obviously top-heavy.

At Hassan Abdal we came again to the Grand Trunk Road, its masses of buffaloes and cattle raising a pall of dust that was—without exaggeration—as impenetrable as a London fog. The final run to Peshawar brought us by the Indus gorge at Attock, where Akbar's famous fort stands sentinel on the east bank, a little south of the point where the Kabul flows in on the west—an impressive old building, long famous in the enthralling history of Indian invasion.

Equally impressive is the iron girder bridge by which

the railway spans the river. It will be remembered that only recently fears for its safety were entertained because of the accumulation of frozen water in the hills, as, in flood time, the river-level sometimes rises nearly a hundred feet. We crossed by the roadway running beneath the railway, with its marvellous view up and down the gorge—and so without incident to Peshawar.

CHAPTER XIV

TRIBAL TERRITORY

Itinerary: Khyber Pass, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Leia, Dera Ghazi Khan, Fort Munro, Rakhni, Loralai, Ziarat Pass, Quetta.

AT Peshawar we felt naturally more than anything that we had come at last to a real outpost of Empire. There is sign of it in the gated city itself, which at times is closed to non-residents in case of riot or, as had just happened, when a fire makes a possible source of panic and disturbance; but the whole area of cantonments as well as of city is ominously set in a girdle of barbed-wire entanglement cut only by the roads, and at night even these gaps are closed and the barbed circuit is complete.

We found the city intensely picturesque and alive with an amazingly interesting crowd. Part of our interest there was to equip our party against the coming rigours with some of the *posteens* that come down through the Khyber Pass by the Kabul Caravan. Then, thanks to the good offices of the Chief Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province and his staff, we were able to make the actual journey through the Pass to the frontier itself.

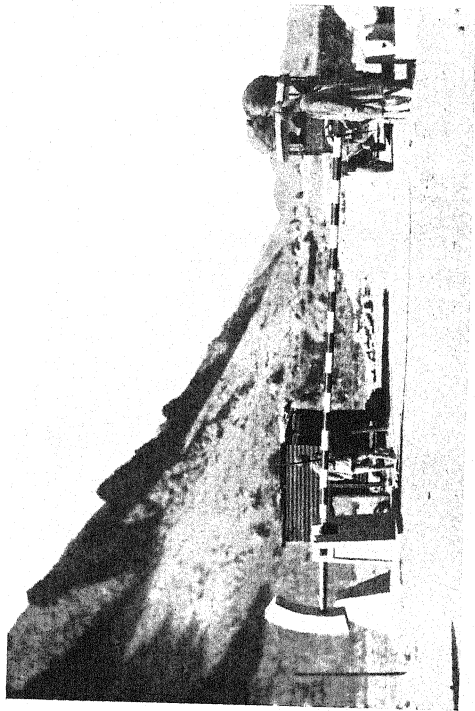
The caravans from either direction have to go through the Pass on a Tuesday or a Friday, as the protection of pickets is only provided on those days. The hubbub of preparation begins on the previous night, and the caravan is early on its way. We overtook the outgoing one on that nine-mile stretch to Jamrud of which Terence Mulvaney gives such a vivid account in *Love o' Women*. Perhaps the Khyber is too well known to need description. But certainly the memory of that picketed stretch of moun-

tainous frontier land is one of the most vivid of our journey. Beyond the fortification tower that guards the narrows of the Ali Masjid gorge, we met the Kabul Caravan. It was not exactly meeting, as the caravans have to take the old road, leaving the main military road free for wheeled transport; but they are seldom far apart, as their windings cross and recross and actually coincide where the Pass is too narrow to admit a double way. At points, too, repairs of the main road made us deviate to the caravan trail. Besides these there is of course the railroad as well.

After the descent to Ali Masjid the road climbs again to Landi Kotal and Brigade Headquarters, the limit for the tourist visitor from Peshawar. But, as a soldier, I had permission, as explained, for our party to descend the farther gorge to Landi Khana, the last outpost of the British Empire toward Afghanistan. Here there was a barrier across the road, with Indian and Afghan sentries, and the old notice that 'It is absolutely forbidden to cross this line'. The frontier post has now been turned into a regular barbed-wire barrier across the valley and up the hill-side. Beyond that barrier the forbidden road winds on down the valley towards Jalalabad and thence up to Kabul, the scene of strange happenings even since our visit, as it has been since the days of Alexander the Great and long centuries before.

Apart from the caravans, the great interest of the road lies in the natives, and particularly in the Shinwari villages clustered in what open ground there is between Jamrud and Landi Kotal—quaint tribal villages, each within its square mud wall and dominated by high loop-holed watch-tower at a corner. It is almost as if each house were fortified against its neighbour. The British Raj never allows fighting on the road or shooting across the road, but the natives of this, as of other tribal territory, are more or less allowed to carry on their feuds undisturbed, so long as the 'road' is respected.

We met the Caravan again, of course, as we returned, and found a number of its camels drinking by the road-



The Afghan Frontier, Khyber Pass.



side. It is a sight that one does not often see. We had seen it last, in fact, only some years previously, very early on a cold morning in Persia, a strange contrast to the afternoon heat of this occasion in the Khyber. Back in Peshawar we saw something of the bustle and excitement of the Kabul Caravan off-loading in one of the many camel *serais* of the city to which they take their way at their journey's end.

From Peshawar to Quetta and beyond we were skirting the fringes of Afghanistan, our places of halt like Kohat, Bannu, Dera¹ Ismail Khan etc. serving as inner line of bases to the definitely frontier outposts farther west. We were frequently in purely tribal territory, and were only naturally impressed by the predominance of Military control rather than the Political. Tribal territory itself is indeed tribe-administered, except for British military control of 'the road' and political 'advice'. We encountered just such a twenty-mile stretch between Peshawar and Kohat through Afridi territory. The tribesmen were magnificent-looking creatures, dark, if sometimes fairish of hair. As a rule it is the women who come out to draw water and cultivate the fields, while the men keep under cover in their fortified houses, as they generally have at least one blood-feud in progress with a neighbour. When the feud is really up, the fun begins. The 'road', of course, must be respected; and we were assured by a British officer of those parts that rival tribesmen fought across the road, with look-out men at each end of the stretch involved, to wave red flags for a temporary 'cease-fire' as soon as any traffic approached!

On the road to Bannu, the base for Northern Waziristan, we came to country wild in another sense. It must certainly have been volcanic, and had something of the appearance of the country lying around the Dead Sea, only on a much larger scale. Its jagged and serrated red suggested more than anything a vision of hell turned to stone. Bannu itself was, for a frontier station, very attractive. It is peculiarly the resort of military grass-widows, as

¹ 'Dera' signifies 'camp'.

officers stationed nearer the frontier are not allowed to take their wives west of Bannu. We enjoyed there the hospitality of Major Parsons, the Deputy Commissioner, and—a little enviously—the tale of his experiences in Kashgar, from where, strangely enough, he had only just returned with a mine of information from that fascinating 'beyond' of our longing.

Beyond Bannu we came to real *putt* country, the sandy waste through which the Indus takes its southward way predominating more and more. In this we gave a helping hand to a couple of military lorries, Morris six-wheelers, which had broken down. They were a strange contrast to the great masses of camels that we now encountered. We might well have been back in Sinai, as we watched these droves wandering past or taking their turn at a water-hole by the little rest-house where we lunched, and the straggling groups of Beduin-like nomads accompanying them.

At Dera Ismail Khan, the headquarters for Southern Waziristan, we came to a veritable oasis, if one can talk of an oasis on a river! The Commissioner's garden was certainly a luxury of fertility in that sandy waste. It had a beautifully green lawn, set about with palms, chrysanthemums and roses. Parrots flew over our heads and a pet gazelle made mad rushes at the end of its tether on the lawn. Palms and parrots apart, we might have been in England, with the old Georgian house in its beautiful setting. As so often in these stations, where house-quarters are usually or often fully utilised, we were put up in tents in the garden, as comfortable and as warm as you could wish to be, with a sufficiency of blankets against night cold.

The house was particularly full at the time because of a Military Conference; and we learnt then something of the efforts that are being made to civilise the frontier. A policy of systematic road-building, while improving military communications, has or is tending to have an indirect but further-reaching effect in encouraging the wild tribesman to new ways of life. A road-system, with the native-driven

car and commerce in its train, may in time appeal to him as a surer and safer way to wealth than the risky raids by which he now strives to achieve it. It is the advent of civilisation through a Chevrolet; and here again one feels drawn to emphasise the opportunity of a big potential market for British motor firms, if only they would adapt their output to local needs. Surely this, of any markets, should be theirs rather than American, as it so very largely is to-day.

From Dera Ismail Khan we had an interesting and experimental run to Dera Ghazi Khan by a little-known track which was pronounced practically impossible—a statement which we wished and were able to disprove. By the normal motoring route to Quetta from the north we should probably have left the Grand Trunk Road at Lahore and come by a more easterly road to Mooltan. From there the main road takes one far south of our route, and doubles back to Quetta through Jacobabad and Sibi. Our track to Dera Ghazi Khan proved practicable and interesting, if strenuous; and from there we had permission to strike across direct to Quetta, using a military road.

We decided to descend on the east side of the Indus, as, in case of any trouble, we could then have resort to the railway. Indeed, we ran parallel with it most of the way unless we were crossing or recrossing it. First, then, we had to cross the four arms of the Indus by the boat-bridges which connect the sandy islands of the river-bed. These, like so much of our track, were covered by a 'corduroy' road of the grasses which are the main vegetation of this sandy waste, and used for an infinity of purposes.

At Darya Khan we took aboard the guide who was to show us the track, if even such it could be called. Really, it was most pronounced where it ran sunk, so to speak, between the slightly raised embankments where soil had been piled on either hand for purposes of cultivation. But this only made difficulty, as the irrigation channels from one patch to another crossed our track at embankment level and therefore made an endless series of obstacles to be surmounted. In earlier stages we bumped over them and at times broke them down; but their brick foundation

made this a dangerous method, and we then had to make our own slopes up to them from driftwood or anything available. Nearer Dera Ghazi Khan definite culverts had been built up across these channels; but these and frequent *kutchha* bridges were often dangerously narrow.

Our worst experience in this experimental stretch was in fact due to one of these latter—and a variety of contributory causes which may serve as fair illustration of the conditions under which we were travelling. After lunch in the rest-house at Kot Sultan we covered some ten miles to Assanpur railway station, with the track 'swept' or 'grass-mended' as it frequently was near places of habitation. But a few miles further on, the track was literally obliterated by a great 'tank', to give a high-sounding name to what was more than anything like a crater or shell-hole filled with water, and dug, perhaps, by some cultivator anxious to poach rather more than his fair share of irrigation-supply. A deviation was necessary. To complicate the natural difficulty of deviation from a sunken track, there was a narrow irrigation channel running parallel to the track, and this we had to cross by an extremely narrow *kutchha* bridge. But beyond the channel and parallel with it ran the *pukka* canal from which the channel ran as a feeder. On negotiating the channel bridge, the leading car turned so sharply—to avoid the canal beyond—that its near rear-wheel slipped over the edge of the 'crater', which was, of course, little else than quagmire. Then came the greater difficulty of getting enough space for the other car to tow it backwards out of the slough on to the narrow bridge to take the turn more liberally. Still we succeeded, and both cars manoeuvred this awkward deviation.

To complete the picture, a few Irish bridges, on which we came with alarming suddenness; and finally the four bridges of boats—as at the beginning—to bring us back again to the west bank of the Indus and so to Dera Ghazi Khan and its dak-bungalow. Even the end of the run was adventurous, as we had to make the crossing in the dark and cover the last ten miles at an hour when travel is no longer officially safe, although actual going was easy, as by

then we had joined the *pukka* road from Mooltan to Dera Ghazi Khan.

The following day was a strange contrast. We were now striking mainly westward for the frontier of Balūchistān; and, instead of track-finding along the flat valley of the Indus, we had indeed a road, but a road that climbed from the few hundred feet of that valley-level to where Fort Munro from its hill-top overlooks a very different valley in a basin of stony hills more than five thousand feet high. We climbed to that height in some thirty miles through a truly terrific gorge, with hair-pin bends too many to mention and sometimes so sharp that we had to reverse to negotiate them. Then we dropped fifteen hundred feet to the frontier post of Rakhni, lying in an elevated but flat desert across which our cars had a splendid race!

Actually we overran the frontier post by ten miles and had to retrace these to the rest-house. There we found the Headman of the village and the man in charge of the bungalow awaiting us on instructions from Quetta; although, on seeing us pass through, they had sent off the firewood and had to recover it for our fires. It was not long, however, before Hussein, undeterred as ever by any inconvenience of dwelling, had an excellent meal ready, and we were feeding in this strange outpost-bungalow of the desert as well and as comfortably as we had in some of the best-equipped dak-bungalows on the Grand Trunk Road.

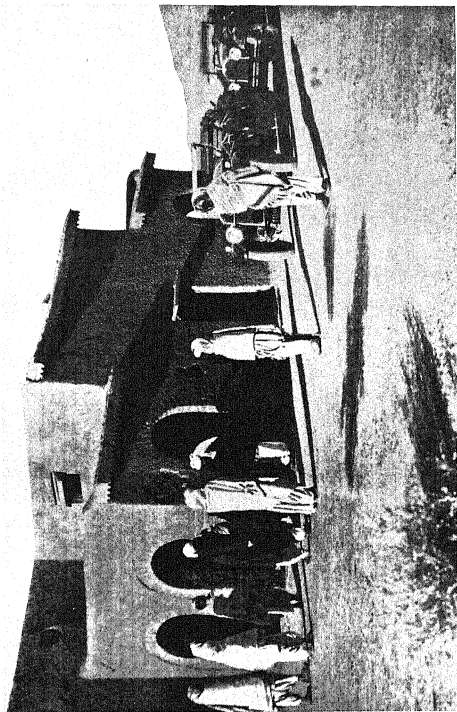
It was a tiny place with three or four rooms and a flat mud roof. There was no cover for the cars, and, as we did not wish the bearers to sleep in the open, we asked for a *chowkidar* to look after the cars and kit. To this the Headman, who was also Chief of the local Levies, replied with great solemnity: 'I am sending eight armed men to guard this house to-night. Two will stay to the north, two to the south, two to the east and two to the west. One of each pair will watch, while the other sleeps.' We felt this protection unnecessary, as one man sitting on the roof could see any object moving for nearly ten miles in any direction across this bare desert in its girdle of stony hills; but we could not

dispute his conception of official duty, the less so as he was a *Hadji* and as great of reputation as he was scoundrelly of appearance.

They may look scoundrels, but they are fine, hardy fellows—these tribesmen of the frontier. We had come through tribal territory most of the previous day, and our coming road from Rakhni to Loralai was tribal territory of doubtful reputation. Quetta had kindly given us permission to use this road, but instructed us that we must do so only on a certain day when the hills would be picketed for our protection by local Levies. This picketing by the Levies serves, in effect, the double purpose of keeping an eye on any stray ruffians who may be about and of occupying the Levies themselves, who, if not officially employed, might indulge in some unofficial bandit-work, and relieve passing travellers of any attractive fire-arms that they might possess. Traffic in rifles is as keen among these tribesmen as that in knives among schoolboys. Our old friend, the Headman, cast longing eyes on our equipment and even tried to bargain; but Quetta would have been too hot to hold me if I had encouraged what they spend their days in endeavouring to quash.

So it came about that our outset from Rakhni was as impressive as our guarded sleep under its moonlit sky; for all our fire-arms were duly prepared and loaded before we left the rest-house. Impressive, too, our road with the pickets guarding the hill-face after we left the level. It was a queer, wild country of rocky hills and stony desert valleys; and these Levies were as picturesque as they were impressive, varying in age from old white-bearded gentlemen to lads of ten or twelve years, or mounted, armed men of more military age. They appeared on the roadside or silhouetted on the skyline every few miles, and we felt that our safe-conduct had become a matter of tribal, almost of national importance.

We climbed by a boulder track which wound up and down deep nullahs, difficult in themselves and the harder as they were so rock-strewn—harder still, if picturesque, when we encountered herds of camels in a defile, a donkey



Sunrise at Rakhni: the Baluchi guard.



caravan, or some tribe on the move. One group we met carrying a dead hyena; and these asked for money. We thought it better not to give them any, but found afterwards that there is a curious custom by which they may collect a certain sum for the head of every hyena killed. They had apparently taken us for officials on whom they could make their claim. At Mekhtar, again, a big village with many fortified towers, we were stopped by a deputation of 'village elders', who presented a paper written in Pushtu. This was handed to Babuzai to read, but he hurled it on the ground practically in their faces and urged us on. I fear that hillman Babuzai, travelling with Sahibs under official protection, was anxious to impress these other hillmen with a sense of his importance. Even the Levies to whom we gave an occasional lift hurled superior jeers at less fortunate pedestrians whom they passed. But perhaps all this is only natural when every man's hand is against his neighbour, and self-assertion is a necessary law of life; where villages, big or little, clustered close together, are walled against each other, and even tiny hamlets side by side are mud-enclosed and protected each with its inevitable tower—be it mud only—against the attacks of its neighbour. These villages increased in number and size and strength—with their fields walled as well—after we joined the main road from Fort Sandeman which brought us into Loralai.

Our night at Loralai was in strange contrast to the previous one in the desert outpost of Rakhni. We were received into a house, the interior of which was as unlike the bare rooms of the night before as the garden, full at that season of English flowers, was unlike the barren hills through which we had been travelling all day. We arrived almost simultaneously with the newly appointed Political Officer for the district, and the latter, like ourselves, was for the moment the guest of the Acting Political Officer, Captain de la Fargue, to whom had been delegated the responsibility of our safe passage through Northern Balūchistān. That evening, seated round the fire in the luxury of real English arm-chairs, we learnt from our host and his

family much valuable information for our onward journey through Western Balūchistān.

Loralai and Quetta are both nearly five thousand feet up, but the rugged mountainous road between them rises in forty miles to nearly nine thousand feet at the Ziarat Pass. Ice on a water-splash across the road gives some idea of the cold. For some time the nights had been intensely cold, and we had always to drain the water from the radiators of the cars. By day, however, the heat of the sun was often a dangerous contrast, and we would have to discard the wrappings in which we had made our early start. But at this height we were only too grateful for the comfort of our *posteens* even at midday. Ziarat itself lies some thousand feet below the summit of the pass—a mass of bungalows, as it is the hill-station for Quetta.

The road down to Quetta was not without its thrills. One should rather speak of the road up and down, as there are several lower passes, and the descent from the top of the next beyond Ziarat wound in sharp curves with dangerous corners and by nullahs strangely shaped. Later, there was a particularly terrifying down-hill run, with the road very narrow and inclined to fall away at the edge, and the parapet actually gone at points, which made sharp corners something of an ordeal, especially as we knew that someone had fallen over the edge not long before. We were dropping—sheer, it seemed—to the plateau on which Quetta lies, protected by its amphitheatre of hills. Afterwards, during our stay there, we were driven out across the plain to see some of the awful nullahs that one encounters in hunting with the Quetta Hounds. One drops sheer off the plain into one of these steep and rugged ravines with an unexpectedness that is appalling. Our zig-zag ‘tumble’ down to Quetta seemed, by comparison, mild!

CHAPTER XV

BALŪCHISTĀN DESERT

Itinerary: Quetta, Sheik Wasil Gorge, Kirdagap, Galangur, Kishingi, Nushki, Ahmad Wal, Yadgar, Dalbandin, Nok Kundi, Warechah, Mirjāwā, Duzdāb.

ON reaching Quetta we had already covered some two hundred miles of Balūchistān; but the picketed stretch belonged very definitely to Tribal Territory and our previous chapter, and it was from Quetta that we were to begin our real trek across Balūchistān desert to Mirjāwā and Duzdāb. Quetta, therefore, marks a definite stage in our journey, and actually we broke it there for a week which was mainly spent in various preparations against the desert trek.

Everyone there assured us that this stretch would be the most difficult part of the journey. It had, indeed, been covered by one or two motorists, but never without trouble, as none had come through without serious damage to cars. Most motorists entrained their cars to the Persian frontier, and took to the road only beyond Duzdāb. Those who attempted the road had apparently, in most cases, to be collected by a rescue-party from Quetta; and it was not surprising, therefore, that officials there were not hopeful of our success. But, if not encouraging, everyone there was exceedingly kind and helpful; and we appreciated their help the more, as they were all considerably pre-occupied with preparations for the reception of King Ammanullah, who was shortly to be in Quetta *en route* for England.

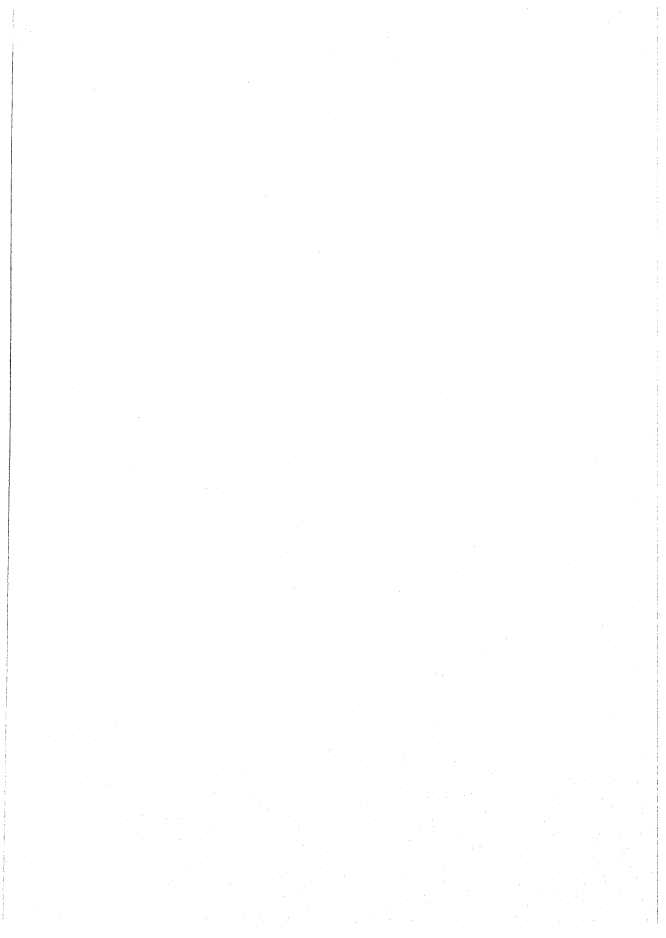
In particular, we were indebted to Mr. Corfield, the Political Agent, and to Major Holland, the Chief of

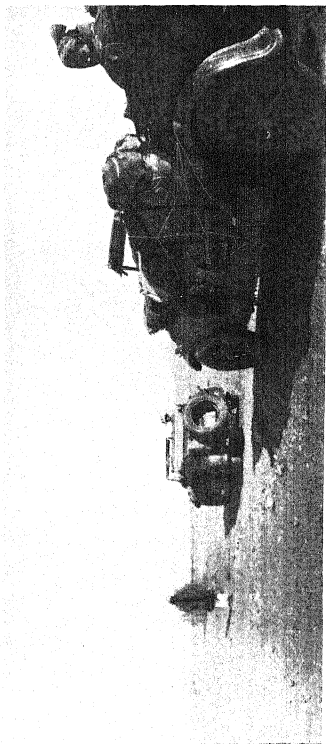
Police. The former almost laughed at our project, but did his best to further it by giving us permission to use Inspection bungalows at points along the road, and still more by providing us with one of his native drivers as guide. This latter, Ghulam Mohammed, was as pessimistic as his master. In fact, he was by no means anxious to accompany us. He had only recently done the journey as guide to a British officer in an antiquated and somewhat unreliable car, which we shall meet—or rather overtake—in a subsequent chapter. The very fact that, leaving Quetta a month later, we still overtook it, may explain our guide's reluctance to repeat the journey. But his scruples were overcome, and he lived to revise his judgment of motor-cars.

From Major Holland we received a wealth of information about the route. While we were still in Quetta, he took us along the 'road' that we were to follow, on which expedition incidentally we received a touching present of enormous water-melons from the old chief of a village through which we passed. The point was that in the early stage of our journey we were to attempt a fresh police trail instead of the more usual route; and here, as all along the road, the information, advice and arrangements provided by Major Holland and, through him, by his Police and Levies, contributed very largely to our success in achieving the journey, as few had previously done, without disaster—and that in five days' run.

The railway authorities were equally kind in arranging for our accommodation at the stations which formed the main, almost the only 'posting-stages'—or, which was more important, the only 'water-points'—along the route. Finally, to the Royal Air Force I owed two specific aids—a valuable check on our aneroid barometer and the issue of a flying-helmet, which I found invaluable against the winter cold in the exposure of the desert.

Interviews and preparations naturally took a considerable time. Here, amongst others, we met Sir Aurel Stein, and had the opportunity of discussing with him our original trans-Himalayan project. Then, apart from Christ-





Baluchi desert; Ghulam on left, Babuzai in rear car.

mas shopping, chiefly in local rugs, we had to take aboard a good supply of stores of every kind for our journey, of which not the least important item was a reserve supply of twelve gallons of water. With these, and our personnel now increased to seven, it was a formidable-looking and certainly a well-laden equipage that left the luxury and safety of the Quetta bungalow for the wilds of the Balūchi desert on that late November morning, Ghulam 'cushioned' on baggage between the bonnet and left wing of the car, as much a forerunner as he could be!

The more usual route to the Sheik Wasil Gorge was by the Kalat road and then along the railway. But, where the railway turns west at Mastung Road, there are peculiarly bad sands to negotiate; and we were advised, as explained, to attempt a new police trail, admittedly sandy, running between the Mashelakh and Chiltan ranges. In twelve miles we were out on sand, interrupted by patches of cultivation and their inevitable accompaniment—as on the Indus track—of troublesome irrigation ditches across the trail. It was a glorious day, with the hills pink in the sunlight or blue and purple in shadow under a sky of clearest blue, as we approached the Sheik Wasil Gorge across a river, which promised trouble, but proved fairly solid under foot and not too deep.

The river ran through the steep-sided gorge. Alongside ran the railway and the apology for a track which crossed and recrossed the stream several times and was in the main strewn with boulders.

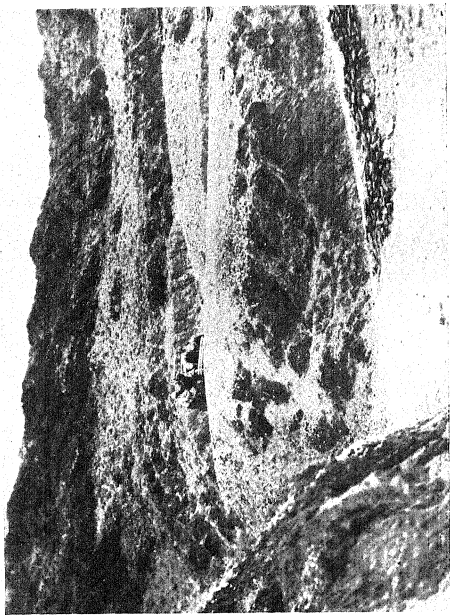
Babuzai and Ghulam proved their worth and weight in heaving these obstacles from our path. Trouble came at what looked to be a patch of firm grass-land, but proved instead a bog in which the two-seater sank. It was too far across for our usual towing-tackle, and we had to use our emergency two-hundred-foot length of hempen rope and tow out backwards. The winding nature of the track made the operation difficult, and there was still the question of getting through by a detour. This was only possible by climbing the rock-face at an alarming angle to what seemed something of a platform, a mere dent in the cliff-side.

With the car in first speed and the rest of the party lending their weight or ready with boulders to keep it from slipping back, I reached the platform and from there slithered down obliquely to the track again, devoutly thankful to be once more on a fairly even keel! The other car followed suit with similar help, and in an hour and a half we had surmounted the first of our really serious troubles.

A little later, beyond Kirdagap station, the four-seater stuck in the soft mud bottom of a cultivation channel. It sounds a simple incident after the other, but it cost us another two hours. This time the two-seater was already across and was able to tow the other out. But to do this we had completely to unload the car, jack it up, under-dig and break down the sides of the channel, and then make a bed of stones, camel-thorn and anything like it that lay to hand. With this delay, we were too late to make our intended stage at Galangur, so we took refuge for the night at Kirdagap station.

We were now running parallel with, and fairly close to, the Afghan frontier; and these stations are fortified enclosures with iron doors and loop-holed walls. Our quarters consisted of the large waiting-room. There were *charpays* for three of us; the other had his bedding on the floor. After our strenuous labours and Hussein's excellent fare we were soon sound asleep in these strange but really comfortable, if communal, surroundings. The cars had to be left on the platform, outside the station walls, under guard of Police-Levies, who also provided our firewood, the chickens for our supper—and water. Against the cold the cars were also under tarpaulins, with radiators emptied as always.

The next morning's cold was a blessing, as the frozen ground enabled us to negotiate without trouble the difficulties of the previous evening. Instead, the two-seater stuck in crossing the railway, which we had to do time and again if we were not running alongside it. The front wheels went into a deep cavity between the lines, and the under part of the car was caught on the rails—an awkward



'Hair-pin' bends in the Nushki Hills.

predicament with the train from Duzdāb expected at any moment. We escaped that trouble by a few minutes, but we were thankful that we had not attempted further the previous night, as the sixteen miles to Galangur took us two hours, climbing in and out of a nullah full of large boulders, where Babuzai, as before, wielded pick and shovel with great enthusiasm and equal skill, as he punctured nothing!

It was a land of arid desert and bare hills; and beyond the Levy Post of Kishingi we found what the hills could mean. We had been climbing out of a valley between low hills on a surface that was almost good enough to be called 'road', when, at the top of a rise, the track rounded a bend and took a terrible corner, with the hill-side rising sharply to the right and falling away in a precipice to the left. Then it dropped, very steep and very zigzag, and so narrow that the four-seater's luggage was brushed off by the rock-face. But that was only prelude. For, after making almost a complete circle in following the valley, we rose again to find a descent far worse than the previous, with two of the worst corners of all our motoring experience. They could only be negotiated by reversing several times; and this was dangerously difficult, as the track was very narrow and its edge away from the hill-face was simply loose metal overhanging the mountain-side, made up sufficiently for animal transport, but unsafe for such a load as ours. We had therefore to be careful not to go too near the edge, and achieved the turn only with my wife holding the hand-brake with both hands and operating the accelerator-pedal with her foot between mine, as I did not dare to take foot off clutch or foot-brake, or either hand off wheel. Ghulam meantime was putting enormous stones in front of the front wheels to keep the car from slipping gently over the precipice! With the two-seater safely down, I returned to warn, advise and help the other car.

So, with no little sigh of relief, to Nushki, a biggish native town, boasting palms and a public garden. There we rested and sheltered from the sun in the house of the Sikh Police Inspector, only hoping that the 'infidel' food

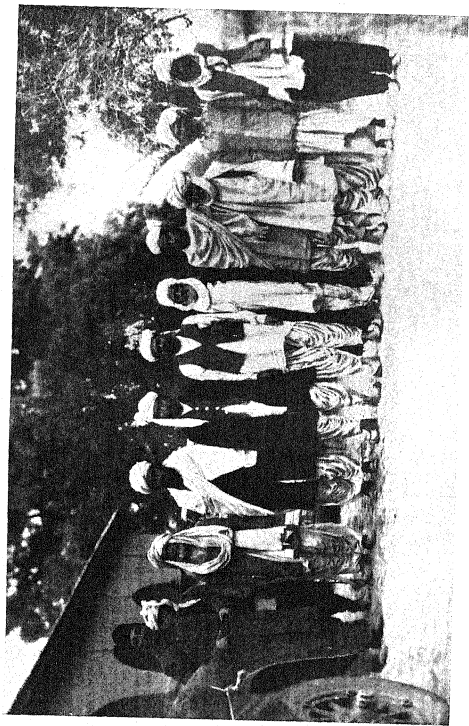
on which we and our bearers lunched did not defile the dwelling of a strict Hindu. It would have ill repaid his hospitable shelter, for he was most kind—and interested in us, too; he had been in England himself as attendant to one of the King's Native Orderly-Officers at the Coronation.

Throughout that day we averaged only eight miles per hour, as the further track to Ahmad Wal was a huge river-bed opening out into bumpy, stony plain, with patches of sand, in one of which the four-seater stuck badly and delayed us for another hour. With experience of desert, one learns to take these sandy patches at a fair speed. Evening brought us to the comfort of an officers' rest-house and a sunset glorious with the colours that one gets only in a desert country with its clear atmosphere; and, later, the strange fascination of that weird desert against its background of southern hills under a canopy of stars extraordinarily bright.

The next morning we bumped maddeningly—now south of the railway—a bare fifty miles in four hours, with no trouble beyond a burst tyre. And still the setting was weirdly attractive even by day—a grove of tamarisks in the sand, blue-green and almost silver with dust; a continual skirting of eerily black rocks, glistening and smooth, but oddly cracked; and range upon range of fairy blue mountains in the distance, as of some dream-country, where one felt that at night one must surely *see* the fairies.

Afternoon brought us more and more to the land of sand-dunes—a formation not unlike the sea, with sand-dunes for waves and hard desert as the trough between each wave. The latter makes good going as long as it is dry, but is hopeless if wet; and its hard mud afforded comforting interludes. The dunes were not impassable, provided that one kept going. Our method was to make a reconnaissance of each stretch of dunes, then give the cars the maximum distance to approach them, put them into low gear and 'let them rip'! Even though we lost time in such reconnaissance on foot, we gained in the long run. It is true that there were moments when the issue hung in the balance, and it seemed as though engine would stop





Baluchi notables of Dalbandin.

or transmission collapse, but the cars proved more than equal to the strain and pulled out every time. Ghulam would sit perched on his wing, urging us on, on, on with a faith in Buicks that was unshakable. But when it became a faith that would remove mountains of sand, dunes that were at least house-high, we refused to share it, and circumvented the impassable ones by resorting to the railway track and bumping along the sleepers, until we reached Dalbandin and the safety of the Political Agent's bungalow, having by then negotiated a hundred miles of trackless dunes—our worst stretches of sand, although we were still to meet a little!

Before leaving next day, we had a 'levée' of native notables who called to pay their respects—the only picturesque touch in a colourless day. For the sky was grey and sunless, the far hills a bluish grey, the nearer a cold brown, and the desert a gloomy deposit of black lava, mile upon mile of undulating pancake, dull, grey and ochre and strewn with black pebbles—the most hideous and depressing country that we have encountered. Ghulam described the track as very 'jumpy', and he must certainly have found it so on his strange perch, as we bumped most of the day into little holes and nullahs, and even in our part of the car one was exhausted by the unevenness.

Nok Kundi provided two sensations. The first was that of the great cable-line of the Indo-European Company, which runs through there, connecting Karachi direct to London. It was strange to come suddenly in this desert upon such a piece of civilisation—a long line of steel posts, perfectly sectioned and everything taut, running through four hundred miles of desert and, here, close to the wild Afghan frontier, but unmolested and intact. We were in touch with London, and yet the next morning we could not move a yard nearer London! We had encountered the inevitable sand-storm of desert journeying.

Although we were up at 5 A.M. the wind did not drop even with the dawn. At 9 A.M., the two-seater ventured its nose round the corner, but I could literally see nothing and make practically no headway. It was noon before the storm

abated enough for us to start, and even then it was bitterly cold. Within an hour we encountered a strange chain of horse-shoe shaped sand-dunes which are ever moving. It was a single chain running from north to south, the hollow of the horse-shoes facing south under the northerly wind. The dunes lay some two hundred yards apart, and the extraordinary feature was that the sand was blown from dune to dune leaving intervals of ordinary desert uncovered. The dunes themselves move always in this queer formation, at right angles to the railway. When we passed (December 1927), one of them was partly across the railway, and a gang of coolies was often necessary to clear a passage for the train. We were struck, too, by another feature—that of the curious sound that they produced, something approaching actual tones. Perhaps we had happened on the phenomenon of ‘singing sands’. It is not unknown to rumour, and indeed in earlier years in Syria—following an inquiry from London—I had been sent out to investigate a similar phenomenon, but in that case without definite results.

Beyond these interesting dunes, we followed a double loop of what was little more than grey, soft, bottomless cinder-track, running between low hills to Warechah station. There we took shelter, for lunch, from the bitter north wind, and during our halt the train from Duzdāb arrived with Mr. and Mrs. Skrine aboard. They had been on the look out for our equipage all along the route, and I fear that common interests in Central Asia and motor-exploration held up that train beyond its usual time. . . . The guard at length expostulated his train into motion; and they glided Quetta-wards, while we bumped our westward way towards mountains, grey in the sunset, and the Persian frontier at Mīrjāwā.

There, in the railway rest-house, we found a most delicious tea prepared for us, with hard-boiled eggs, cakes and cigarettes all laid out ready. For this and other comforts we were indebted to the frontier official of the British ‘Post’, a tall, fine-looking Afghan, with whom, as Pathan, Babuzai proudly proclaimed to us his racial kinship. Saïd

Ali Khan, our noble friend, reappeared after tea with his very antithesis, the Persian Customs official, as small, delicate and effeminate as the Afghan was magnificent, burly and upstanding. The latter did not hesitate to explain to us in front of the Persian that until the British had come there at the close of the War and pacified the country, this territory, though belonging to Persia, had been visited by no Persians. It was considered too dangerous and was left in the hands of the tribesmen. The little Persian sat quietly by, smiling gently to himself—the smile, perhaps, of cultured knowledge; for he had been to Cambridge! But he did not venture to argue the Afghan's statement.

Indeed, the stretch from Mīrjāwā to Duzdāb, though officially Persian, is something of a 'No Man's Land'. The Customs are at Duzdāb and not at Mīrjāwā; and the railway, carried on to Duzdāb by the British during the War, is still maintained—at a point that is obviously of importance as an outlet for Sēistān grain. The track climbed steadily through this debatable country; and, looking back as we left Mīrjāwā, we saw to the south the sun striking on the snow-covered summit of volcanic Kuh-i-Taftan, towering to more than thirteen thousand feet.

We lunched at the highest point of our road, five thousand feet up, with a downward view upon Duzdāb; a line of camels, carrying brushwood, and in charge of Persian soldiers camel-mounted, making a picturesque foreground to the picture as they passed. Then in a few miles we dropped down into Duzdāb and so came triumphant to the end of those eight hundred miles of desert, having proved, if nothing else, the charm and utility of our guide and the solidity and reliability of our cars.

CHAPTER XVI

TO MESHED IN THE MOUNTAINS

Itinerary: Duzdāb, Safidawa, Shusp, Sarbisheh, Birjand, Saman Shah and Dehaneh Sulieman Passes, Gunabad, Turbat-i-Haidari, Gudar-i-Kharsang and Gudar-i-Khumari Passes, Muhammad Mirza Pass, Robāt-i-Safid, Meshed.

ARID mountains, a desert of hard-baked, red-brown earth, the long black streak of railway across it ending in a collection of mud huts—and there you have a picture of Duzdāb, which during the War was a large British camp occupied by the force known as the East Persian Cordon. To-day the camp has become a Consulate; and there is a station of the Indo-European Cable Company, already mentioned, in the charge of a solitary Englishman who, single-handed, is responsible for the hundreds of miles of wire laid across Balūchistān and Persian desert—a romantic figure, surely, as he travels by camel over the vast desert spaces, keeping ceaseless watch upon his strange section of that long and important line of Imperial communication.

From Duzdāb as base, the East Persian Cordon went northwards towards Meshed, to complete as far as possible the circuit of Afghanistan against possible trouble after Russian abandonment of the Allied cause. An excellent military road was, in fact, constructed by the British; and this we were hoping to enjoy after our desert trail. But we were soon disillusioned, as, with truly Persian improvidence, the road had been allowed to fall into such disrepair that for quite three-quarters of its length it was unusable; and parts of this journey were actually among the most strenuous that we encountered.

For some two hundred miles beyond Duzdāb we were still crossing barren desert, using the old road where possible; but desert conditions, to which we now felt fairly inured, were complicated by rain which fell on our first day out and very heavily at night. Rain apart, the stretch to Safidawa is practically waterless desert and very difficult for caravans. Normally no native is out after dark, but as late as 8 o'clock we encountered a bus full of natives, stranded in the desert with radiator empty; and two of our spare gallons saved them from a bitter night in the open.

New Safidawa is a relic of an East Persian Cordon camp, of which there were naturally many along our route. Most of them, unfortunately, are sadly dilapidated; that at Hurmukh, where we had lunched, has degenerated into dirty shelters for animals. This at New Safidawa is now a rest-camp for caravans and cars. We arrived in rain and found difficulty in getting an empty hut or room in which to sleep. Indeed we owed our accommodation, poor as it was, to some Russian road-menders. They gave us their room, in which there was just space for our four bedding-rolls on the mud floor. It had no doors, but a fireplace in which they kindled a good fire: they also gave us a lamp, and found our bearers somewhere to cook and sleep. After squatting to Hussein's stew, we were soon stretched as far as we could stretch, and slept like logs in spite of two open doorways on a December night, and a very hard and uneven floor. Where our 'good Samaritans' slept themselves, I do not know—in one of the *fourgeons*, perhaps, with which the camp was crowded. But, refugee roadmen though they were, they would take no payment for their room!

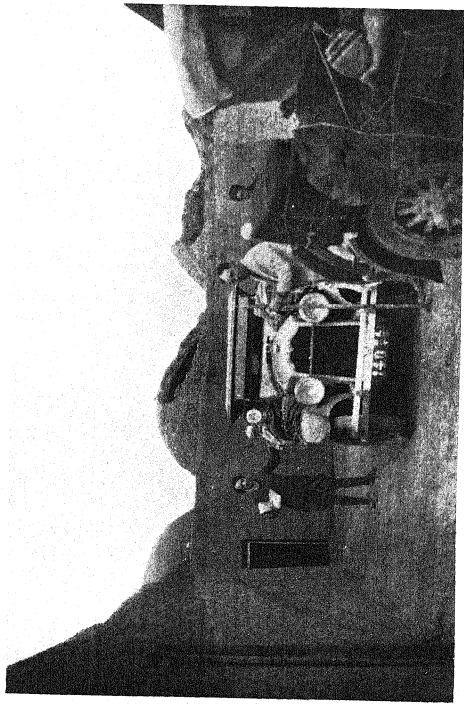
The run to Shusp was trying, with rain and frequent detours on and off the 'road'. Where it had not been destroyed by floods and weather, it was excellent; but the Persians have allowed culverts and bridges to become choked, and, therefore, great pieces of the raised embankment have been washed away by storms, and we had to deviate from the proper track on to desert to avoid huge gaps in the embankment. On one of these deviations we

saw a couple of wolves chasing each other in the distance ahead.

Shusp itself lies high, and was used as an E.P.C. Convalescent Camp. There are still many buildings, though now it is only a small native village. After our quarters of the previous night, the attraction of a clean, if primitive, Consular rest-house—with *charpoys* in lieu of floor—and still more that of a bath, induced us to spend the night there, although we arrived before three o'clock.

We rose next morning to see snow-covered hills misty in the sunrise. The wind was blowing from them bitter cold, as later we tried to find our way into Sarbisheh, which seemed ungetatable from floods, mud, broken road and broken bridges. When found, it was quite a big village of mud houses, and very typical of the country. From the absence of timber, the houses here have strangely rounded roofs, and look just like beehives. Beyond Sarbisheh we climbed by a high pass that brought us a still more wonderful view of the snow-hills ahead and a still bitterer wind; then we dropped down to Birjand in its valley, by mud-walled villages and forts—it was difficult to say which—skirting amongst others the town of Mud, famous for its carpets.

Birjand is the capital of South-Eastern Persia and the summer quarters of our Consul at Seistān—a place, therefore, of considerable importance, although its main street is nothing else than a very wide river-bed! Our quarters were again a car *serai* dignified by the name of garage. The bank manager, a Scotsman, offered my wife and myself hospitality in the luxury of 'European' quarters; but we were particularly anxious that our party should not be separated, and so adjourned, after enjoying his kind hospitality at dinner, to the sleeping-benches of this *serai*, where there was accommodation for us all. Our dinner was strangely interrupted by the native servants, who came in, in a great state of excitement not unmixed with fear, to say that 'something very curious was happening to the moon'. There was, in fact, an almost total eclipse of a peculiarly bright moon.



Consular Rest-House at Shusp: Mrs. McCallum and Rumsey-Williams unpacking.



On leaving Birjand we found ourselves in more hilly country—the foot-hills of the mountains of North-East Persia, behind which Meshed lay. Within twenty miles we were nearly up to seven thousand feet at the top of the Saman Shah Pass, where we encountered a small donkey-caravan and the strange spectacle of turbaned, long-coated men wearing cummerbunds *outside* their coats. Both cars ‘stalled’ on the next climb, mud rendering the steep gradient difficult to negotiate. Then the road ran through a nullah, crossing the river six times in four miles. Up again to the Dehaneh Sulieman Pass, considerably lower than the previous, but with a bad descent of a hundred feet in three hundred yards—and an icy wind that almost penetrated our sheep-skins and quickly brought out our fur-lined flying-helmets. The whole of the road of steep ups and downs through frequent nullahs was in effect a great test of the cars’ reliability, especially of their climbing and braking powers.

The descent to Gunabad brought us to yet another type of night-quarters in a Persian hostel. It was, in fact, a bazaar of some dozen booths, with rooms above, of which we had two, opening out on to a balcony. Our cars were stowed in the open square below. Inside, our room had a disconcerting staircase in one corner leading directly to the room below; and this we took the precaution of blocking. In the morning we awoke to a very picturesque scene, as the small square of which our hostel formed a side—with a big mosque at right angles to it—was used as a bedding-down place for camels, which we watched being fed.

Before leaving, we had a row with the headman of the town, on discovering that our ‘panoram’ kodak had been stolen during breakfast, the leather strap which fastened it to the car being cut right through. It could be of little use to a peasant, but he probably hoped for something better. He had also taken a bottle of white anti-sunburn lotion. It must have looked funny on a Persian skin, as it gives a curiously clown-like aspect, unless carefully applied!

A few miles out we were passing over desert through which ran a salt stream; and for five miles on either side of this stream we encountered a curious fog, which made going slow, with the road, too, very muddy and slippery. A little later we were delayed for two hours by adjustments to one of the vacuum tanks, which was not drawing properly. During this wait we had an interesting meeting with some Persians who were out gazelle-shooting. They explained—in excellent French—that this was the last point where they could get fresh water coming south until they were past the twenty-mile stretch of salt which we had just negotiated.

That delay was serious, as the sequel will show. We had hoped to make Meshed that night, but it was after four o'clock before we left Turbat-i-Haidari, with nearly a hundred miles of stiff climbing ahead of us. We should have fared better if we had stayed there. It is a wonderfully picturesque spot, with the most unspoilt of native bazaars, a living replica of the scenes of *Hajji Baba of Ispahan*. We lunched in a room off the yard of a big caravanserai—a veritable quagmire under its strange medley of camel and mechanical transport, Persian, Russian and Afghan. For we were coming to the greater civilisation of the north, and the *serais* from this point onward were as much motor *serais* as camel *serais*. There are still camels and donkeys and horse-drawn *fourgeons*; but, for animated confusion, one wants to see the native 'bus', with its equally huge loads of wool and cotton and humanity—and no silencer for motor or mankind.

Our difficulties began on the Gudar-i-Kharsang Pass, which gave us some idea of what we might expect. It was extraordinarily steep, with a precipice on one side and the mountain slope towering sheer on the other. The ascent was bad, with the wheels spinning on the sun-melted snow—and two dead camels across the track, casualties from some caravan, left with the usual Eastern cruelty to die on the road where they had fallen. But the descent was even worse. Then, having just survived the next climb, we dropped down, to find a Chevrolet truck stuck in a

deep snowdrift, and thence further delay in towing it out.

In consequence, it was quite dark, and therefore our road the more difficult because unseen, as we started to climb the Muhammad Mirza Pass, the highest and worst of all. With the road itself climbing very steeply and its surface of snow becoming steadily more slippery under the night frost, the wheels failed to grip and both cars gave out under their heavy loads. They had to be pushed up to the top, each in its turn, one man guiding and all the others pushing—including our friends of the Chevrolet—while my wife and old Hussein reconnoitred for rocks and other obstacles. With perseverance, we topped the pass in bright moonlight and bitter cold at nine o'clock. From there we ran down, or rather crawled, by a very steep and long descent to the little village of Robāt-i-Safid, where we decided to spend the night, having fortunately telegraphed Meshed from Turbat-i-Haidari that we might not win through that night.

It was certainly the strangest of the many strange nights that we had spent on our journey. There was still snow on this lower ground, and it was very cold, but dry, with bright moonlight. The cars were drawn up outside the *serai*, a two-storied, mud building, in which we had rooms on the bottom floor with verandas and steps into the open square. Wood was provided for fires, but, in the absence of windows, we slept with doors open. It was a wonderful night because before we went to sleep, and in the early morning whenever we awoke, we could hear the bells of the camel-caravans as they padded by in the snow; in fact the bells were the only noise we heard, the snow completely deadening any other sound; and camels tread softly anyhow.

Morning showed us our road running along the mountain crest, and, following it, we overtook caravan after caravan that we had heard passing through the night, and met as many on their southward trek. At last, on topping a ridge after some thirty miles, the troubles of the previous night were forgotten as we beheld almost at our feet a blue

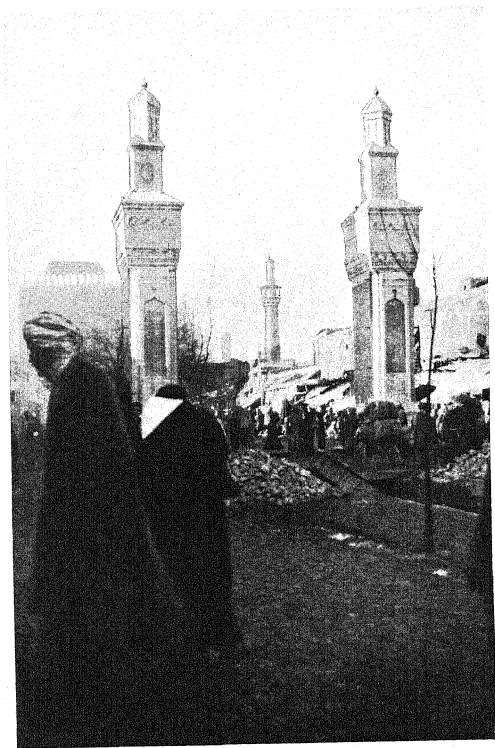
haze of smoke against the green floor of the valley, and could make out even at that distance, more than a thousand feet below, the blue-tiled minarets and golden dome of Meshed's shrine, one of the most sacred of the Moham-medan world.

Meshed is to the Shia sect what Mecca is to the Sunni, and thousands make pilgrimage every year to the tomb of Imam Reza, the great martyr of their faith. The Sacred Shrine itself—the Holy of Holies—is situated in the bazaar and is jealously guarded by fanatical adherents of Islam, and by heavy chains slung across the roadways to protect every approach against infidel intrusion. The strictness of this guard was proved in a somewhat amusing episode that occurred at the time of our visit.

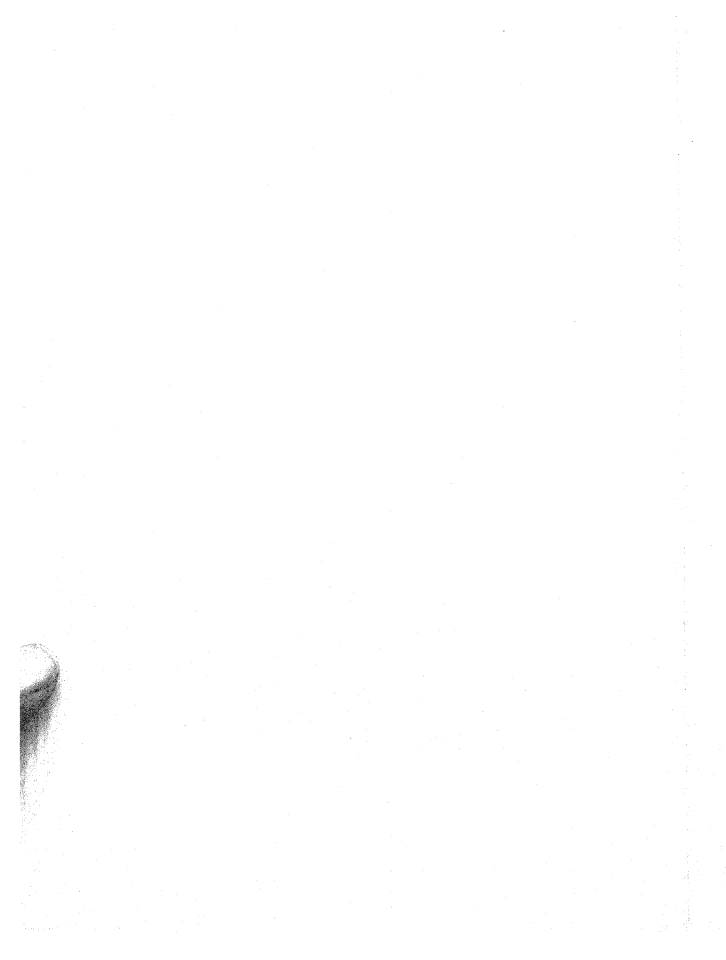
There arrived from Angora a high-born Turkish family, the father a Deputy of the Turkish National Assembly. A devout Mohammedan, he went to make his devotions at the Shrine; and, in modern and obligatory Turkish fashion, he went in Western grey felt hat and lounge suit complete, accompanied by his wife in latest Parisian mode. But to the men of Meshed Western garb is the garb of an infidel; and, despite protests, he was refused admittance. He and his wife returned the following day in more Eastern and therefore less conspicuous garments and were admitted. His protests were the more bitter when he found that the Shrine, the sanctity of which they had been unworthy to approach in Western garb, was the gossip-centre of tea-drinking crowds, and this Holy of Holies of true believers allowed by its guardians to sink to the level of a common Persian tea-house.

But that is digression into what was for us forbidden ground; and we must turn to other parts of mud-walled Meshed and in particular to our quarters in the British Consulate, where we enjoyed for five delightful days the luxurious hospitality of Colonel Biscoe, the Consul-General.

The high walls of the Consulate, like those of the town itself, give little idea of the beautiful gardens hidden within them. Through the great gateway, and we found ourselves immediately in a lovely garden that might have been



The Shia Shrine at Meshed.



in England, with its lawns and poplars and English flowers and its Georgian-looking house. Inside, and we might well have been at home, when we found ourselves comfortably settled in the big, English arm-chairs of the library in front of a truly English fire. In fact, the only un-English touch was that of the brightly coloured Persian rugs, as was the red of the chenars in the garden without. Upstairs—and perhaps we appreciated them still more—we found a large bedroom and dressing-room, each containing a European bed, with spring mattress and white linen sheets, fireplaces with wood fires, and, best of all, a blue-tiled bathroom and a real bath! Travel for days without a sight of such luxuries, and you will conceive something of our appreciation.

This Consulate-General is one of the old buildings of pre-War regime and more like a Legation, its high-walled compound containing as well the houses of the Vice-Consul, the Military Attaché and the Doctor, besides the Chancellery and the quarters of the Indian staff.

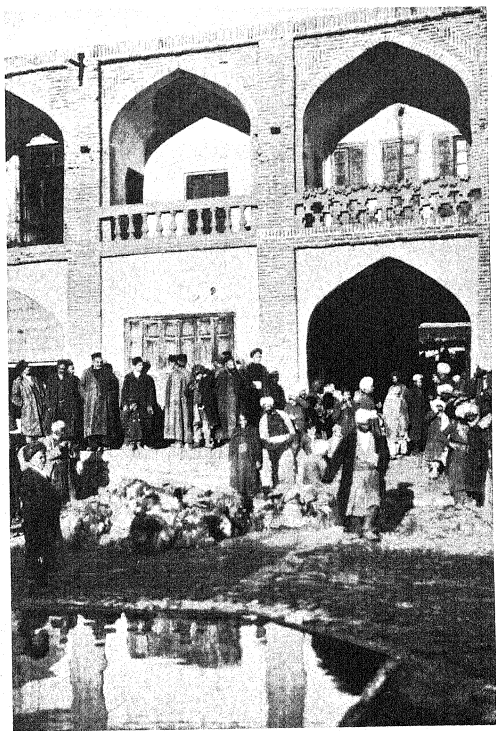
Meshed was full of interest. We might, indeed, have missed it altogether by striking some thirty miles to the south of it direct to Tehrān. But we were again anxious to make contact with the route of our earliest planning, which would have brought us, had we been allowed to take it, through Russian Turkistan to Meshed; and in fact we gleaned considerable information as to the feasibility of our original project from M. Gros, a charming Belgian, who was Chief of the Customs at Meshed. We even encountered some of the Bolsheviki who had made that route impracticable for us, and under rather odd circumstances.

Tucked away within its rampart of mountains, with Afghanistan on one side and Turkistan on the other, Meshed itself is accessible only by car, camel or horse; yet, if one crosses the border into Turkistan the Russian railways bring it within ten days' journey of London. Russian influence is naturally fairly prominent there; and it is in fact the Russian railways that have robbed Meshed of the great importance that it used to have when the western commerce that those railways now carry to Cen-

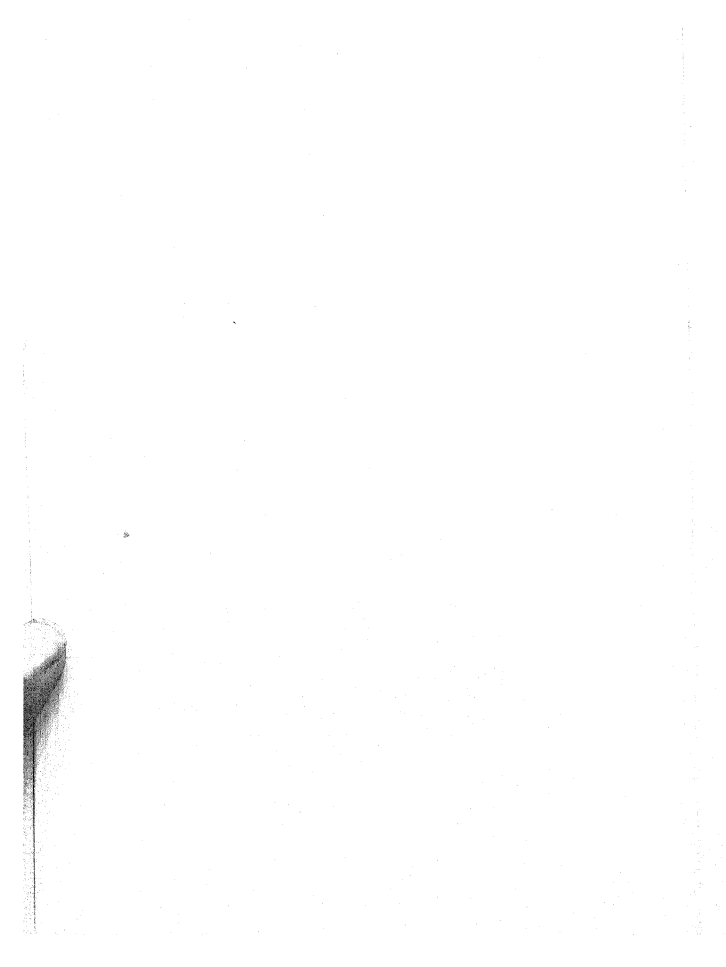
tral Asia came more through Persia, with Meshed as its north-eastern outlet. It is, therefore, a corner upon which the Bolsheviki keep a watchful eye, and an eye that watches particularly any foreigners in that corner. So it came about that, at a great Persian festivity, which I was privileged to attend, the Governor of Meshed very obviously separated the sheep from the goats, or the goats from the sheep—whichever you please—the Bolsheviki delegation from the representatives of other nations. The festivity took the form of fireworks, supper and a theatrical performance. Perhaps the farces thawed us; at any rate, the performance over, sheep and goats mingled in amicable conversation and without internationally disastrous results.

But Meshed had another, and a much more Persian, interest for us in the wonder of its rugs. There is, of course, the more irregular product of the tent-looms of nomad weavers. But in Meshed we saw the work of the town-folk using the permanent looms of factories run on more modern standards of hygiene, ventilation, hours of work, etc. We saw there what must have been some of the finest carpets in the world. Some were being made for the Shah—one a copy of the famous Arbil rug in the South Kensington Museum. There were a hundred and twenty knots to the inch. But the *chef-d'œuvre* was one of two hundred and twenty, which the owner of the factory was having woven for himself. The best weaver and his two sons had been working on it for three years and were hoping to finish it within three more months. It was of the very finest texture, so supple that it was like velvet. Incidentally, he had already refused an offer of a thousand pounds for it, and that for an entirely new rug. Here it may not be amiss to explain that the value of any Persian rug lies, apart from its texture, in the use of purely vegetable dyes; and that the Government exercises a strict control in passing for export under government seal only such rugs as take this test.

With rugs, camel-bells and other lures of the Meshed bazaar, we left the city under a still heavier load than ever; such is the way of woman!



A *serai* in Meshed.



CHAPTER XVII

THROUGH KAVIR TO TEHRĀN

Itinerary: Nishapur, Sabzawar, Abbasabad, Shahrud, Damghan, Samnan, Qishlaq, Tehrān.

THE stay at Meshed had given time to overhaul the cars; but we found them none the worse for wear—not even the clutches, for all the strain that they had undergone in the arduous run from Quetta. They had now, under the conditions prevailing, as stiff a stretch to cover as any previous. We were on the ‘high road’ from Meshed to Tehrān, it is true, but the nature of that ‘road’ will be clear from the fact that we delayed our start from Meshed by two days because of ominous advices of the condition of the Tehrān road, with reports of sixteen cars stuck on it! Actually, we encountered as many casualties ourselves!

Indeed, the ‘road’ from Meshed to Tehrān is little else than a trail running between the Scylla of mountains to the north and the Charybdis of the Kavir to the south. One does not want to press the metaphor too closely, but the mountain spurs shot out periodically into the desert track, rather like the Odyssean monster; and certainly one sometimes felt that Kavir mud might suck one down as successfully as Charybdis, if more slowly. The surface, when dry, was easy; but rain made a quagmire of it; and, although we were fairly fortunate in escaping rain when actually *en route*, there had been and continued to be sufficient rainfall at night to make much of our going very difficult. The ruts of previous cars or other vehicles made the best of such going over—or rather through—the Salt Desert; but trouble came when we met the makers of the ruts, stuck.

It was largely, almost entirely, a question of pushing or pulling, when we came to the patches of liquid mud, where the lower slopes of the mountain ranges gave way to true Kavir. Perhaps the most galling part was the non-chalance of our guide—an ex-taxi-driver from Bombay—who sat on in undisturbed serenity while everyone except the driver was continually disembarking to lighten the load, and having to catch up on foot to re-embark when once the car had roared its way through on lowest speed.

If we were not involved ourselves, we were helping others out; for one learns on such a stretch, if not elsewhere, the camaraderie of the road, though 'help' might sometimes degenerate into the virtue of 'necessity' when a casualty barred our way. We were travelling, too, somewhat better equipped than most, and could therefore give 'first aid', as occasion demanded. A Frenchman in Tehrān, indeed, declared that we were travelling not with a car but with *une usine ambulante*.

These worst stretches of real Kavir lay between Nishapur and Sabzawar, between Sabzawar and Abbasabad, and between Samnan and Qishlaq—stretches of morass for some ten miles at a time. It was after one such day that Hussein gave his not unnatural judgment on the roads of Persia. But the fact that we averaged only nine miles per hour on the week's run to Tehrān—something over five hundred miles—will show that the road as a whole made difficult going. Perhaps a diary of punctures would best give an idea of the conditions under which we were travelling.

Mud, ruts, waterholes, sheets of water and consequent detours; dry but stony patches; the usual troubles of cuts and channels in the neighbourhood of cultivation; and, as we came nearer the mountain spurs, the difficulties of melting snow and the rifts of the glacier slopes—these were the normal features of the 'high road', even away from the quagmire of Kavir.

Still, it was the high-road—very different from the deserted track of Balūchistān, much busier than the road from Duzdāb to Meshed. It was, perhaps, the traffic of the road that made the conditions seem the stranger. For

there was just such a procession of the road as we had met on the Grand Trunk Road, although the roads themselves were so unlike—the same unceasing movement, different only in some of its details.

There were caravans of mules and camels, who made muddy tracks the muddier, but, by way of compensation perhaps, enlivened the road with the beautiful tones of their bells. There was that marvel of ramshackle discomfort, the horse-drawn post-carriage, the ubiquitous *fourgeon*, often with four horses abreast and nine men aboard. We saw donkeys everywhere, in caravan or solitary, but always the true beast of burden that he is in the East, looking like nothing so much as a walking hay-stack or Macbeth's perambulating wood, as he approached under the tremendous load of fodder or faggots that he is made to carry. Then came a quaint old barouche, rather lost-looking amid twentieth-century cars and lorries; and, for final touch of modernity, an aeroplane overhead at Aivan-i-Kif bound for Meshed, one of a regular German service of commercial 'planes plying between Meshed and Tehrān.

Then all along the road there was the bustle of halting-stages—*serais* for man, motor and beast; or the simpler *chai-khaneh*, or tea-house, in greater evidence the further we went west, with benches on which we would see some peasant outstretched in enjoyment of his opium pipe or its opiate effects. There was always some such primitive inn at any one of the mail-stages which were a regular feature of the road. For the Persian learnt his system of post-stages from his earliest emperors in days when Rome was young; and he has kept them ever since. Indeed, it is only a few years since actual toll was taken at these wayside 'posts', some of them in more deserted parts the relics of the watch-towers of ancient days, others naturally at the entrances of mud-walled villages or gated cities. In 1925 we paid out some fifteen pounds sterling between Tehrān and the western frontier. But to-day, even if toll is no longer taken, the 'posts' remain, and we had to show our papers—passports or police-permits—not once but a hundred times.

But our interest and excitements during the run to Tehrān lay almost as much in our strange night-halts as on the road itself. And not the least strange was our first night, which we spent in Nishapur. It was after dark when we crossed its moat and entered the gateway piercing its high walls, to find ourselves in the tunnel of a cobbled street, lit only by the lantern of the servant whom our host had sent to meet us. He guided us through covered bazaar and out again through the city walls across moat and road and stream to the dwelling of his master, Maluk Sahib, Governor of Nishapur. It was well that we had a guide, for, even with him, one car contrived to fall through the bridge-way that crossed the stream!

There, in the birthplace and burial-place of Omar Khayyām, we spent a truly Persian night, which should surely have made us forget the water-logged fields and muddy lanes by which we came to it. After a banquet, Persian in its style and magnificence, the Governor appeared, accompanied by his brother, who spoke some Hindustani; and we were asked to take wine with him, a servant producing an enormous flagon of the local vintage. It was a bottle beyond our experience, and must have held two or three gallons. The Governor drank our health, and I expressed appreciation of his princely hospitality and incidentally of the wine. At that, he presented it to us, saying that we must take it with us on our journey. I explained that our load was already heavy, and that the wine would not be improved by such a jolting as it would get. 'Then', said the Governor, 'let us drink it now!' We did our best not to offend this son of Omar, but after several glasses we resigned the unequal contest, pleading in excuse our early start; and so, as Pepys would say, to bed, but our beds were valises on the floor.

After accomplishing some seventy miles in eleven hours, including our first experience of true Kavir, we came somewhat weary to Sabzawar and a further thrill. As we made our way through the narrows of its walled and cobbled streets, the leading car collapsed; or rather the street collapsed below it and the car sank into the town

drain which ran beneath. After an hour or more spent in raising the car, we found our way to the house of the Sikh merchant with whom we were to spend the night—Lab Singh, a most picturesque and benevolent-looking old gentleman, white-turbaned, and with the usual large beard, in his case grey, divided in the middle and twisted over his ears. His partner, Fozr Kemal, a young Turk, was equally, if differently, picturesque with his large cloak, which he wore like an Italian officer, flung over one shoulder. He very kindly accompanied us for a few miles in the morning to guide us on our outward journey over bad road. But our excitements began before we left Sabzawar itself.

It is almost impossible to convey an adequate idea of the narrowness of the cobbled streets of these Persian towns, flanked by courtyard walls, with angles that are possible for camel or donkey, but never intended for cars. In fact, one sees *fourgeons* only on the high road. Those great broad wagons 'camp' in *serais* outside; they could never penetrate the streets or take their corners. In trying to take one, the leading car stuck. So we had to make our way out by another street, which led through the bazaar. Here we had an exciting time, as the bazaar was very narrow, and at the narrowest part we met a camel caravan laden with petrol-crates. The camels looked like jibbing, so Babuzai sprang out, and seizing their headropes dragged them past, while we fended the boxes off our wind-screens. Unfortunately, in avoiding us, the camels laid waste a tailor's shop. Then came a poor little porter, tottering under an enormous sack of wool, and looking for all the world like one of those egg-laden ants. High-handed Babuzai, fresh from camel-control, upset him in most cavalier fashion; and he collapsed backwards on the top of his bundle, where he lay kicking his legs in the air like an overturned fly that does not know how to recover its footing. It might by accident have been called an 'accident'; but Babuzai's drastic way with timid Persians had to be checked on more than one occasion. Sabzawar certainly felt both our coming and our going.

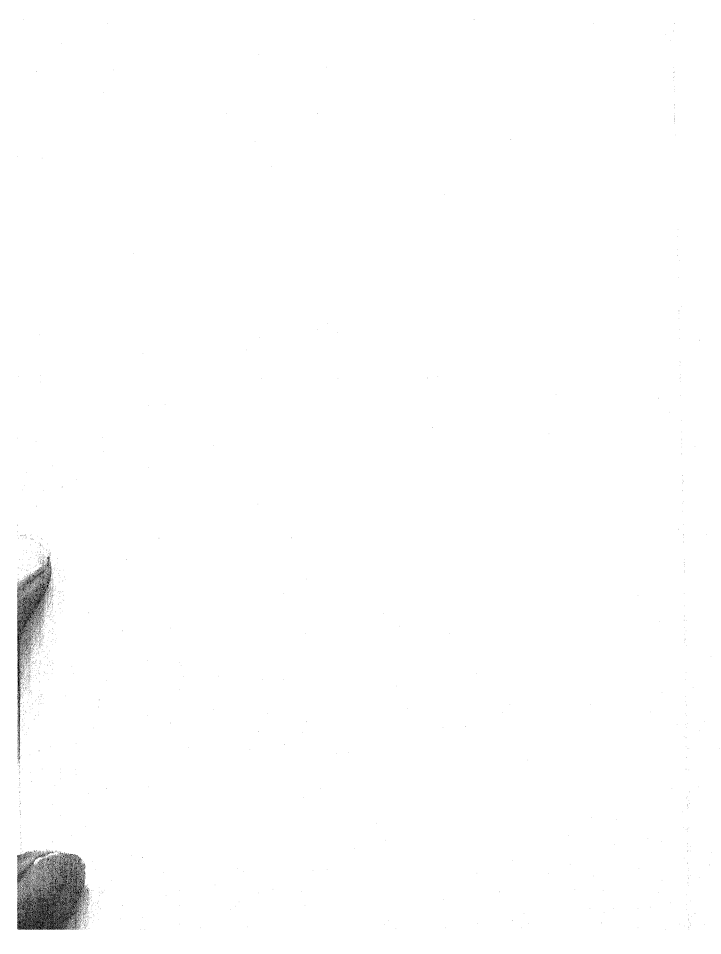
The hospitality of these nights we owed to the kindly offices of Colonel Biscoe at Meshed. But on our third night, after a further dose of Kavir, our quarters were much less luxurious, if more typical of the road—a motor *serai* outside Abbasabad, very primitive but quite clean. Our rooms were made of mud and still a trifle damp; but attendants laid rugs and gave us charcoal-braziers. Unfortunately, as there were no windows, we had to put the brazier outside when we went to bed, and keep the doors open all night, although it was mid-December.

From Abbasabad, our run was, comparatively, easier than it had been. There were bad patches; but we were mainly crossing drier desert slopes, clear of the Kavir itself, with nothing particularly worthy of mention, unless it be the pedestrian who was spinning as he walked, or the vultures who, equally undisturbed by motorists, were making their meal off a couple of dead camels and one of those splendid, shaggy, Persian sheep-dogs—neglected in death as they had probably been ill-treated in life. As a result, it was only four o'clock—an early finish—when we came by the old toll-bar, through streets lined with poplar and willow, to Shahrud, and repeated our experience of Governor's house, Persian banquet and floor-bed of valises.

But Shahrud was most important for us in providing a charming though temporary addition to our party. For it was there that we overtook the young Sapper subaltern whose trail of motoring misfortunes we had been following ever since Quetta. That he left such a trail was not surprising, as he had set out from Kohat to motor to England in a car that had seen better days. He had bought it some years previously—third-hand, I think—and in those better days it had boasted a racing-body. It subsequently donned a touring body, but doffed important component parts at sundry points along the road. They say that a Sapper is either 'married or mad'. This one was unmarried; and his equipment for his overland journey, apart from his 'car', consisted of a little tea, some tins of sardines, and a large tin of Army biscuits, which had to



The Sapper, the Governor of Shahrud, and Mrs. McCallum.



serve as rations not only for himself but for Daffy, his companion in distress—a large bull-terrier—the most charming dog personality, with an extremely intelligent face and, fortunately, a most philosophical disposition.

From Shahrud to Beirūt these two formed part of our convoy; and, if at times they added to our difficulties, they certainly increased our enjoyment. They were both unusual figures, as our friend himself wore a Turcoman hat and a most disreputable *posteen*, while Daffy had a rakish appearance from an absurd little flannel coat, which generally slid under her instead of covering her back.

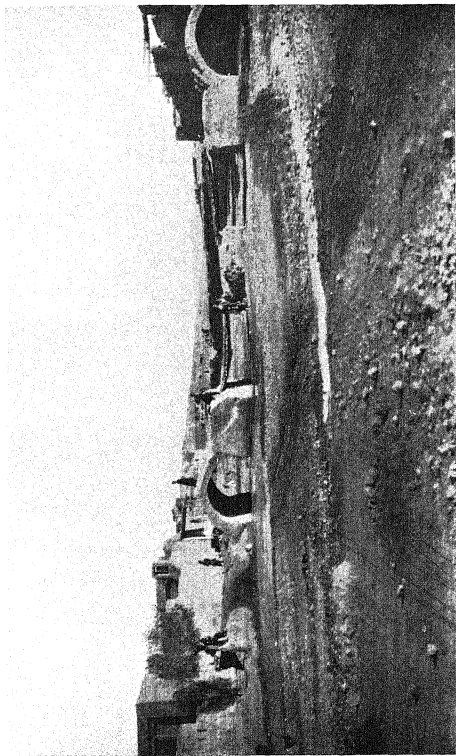
It still remains a wonder to me how that vehicle survived as far as Beirūt. The steering-gear went wrong on the way to Tehrān, and the radiator immediately afterwards, with the result that halts were frequent, while its boiling waters were cooled. Beyond Baghdad the tyres gave out, and we had to wait, perishing with cold, while he repaired them. Then, one by one, his lights disappeared, and he finally reached Beirūt with one headlamp tied on with pieces of a shirt. What other parts of that motor strew the Syrian Desert, I do not know. But from Beirūt, man, dog and car took ship for England.

It was a still more imposing convoy, therefore, that left Shahrud, the Sapper's chariot beating out a noisy but optimistic farewell, and Daffy standing sentinel on the back seat with fore-paws on top of the front one.

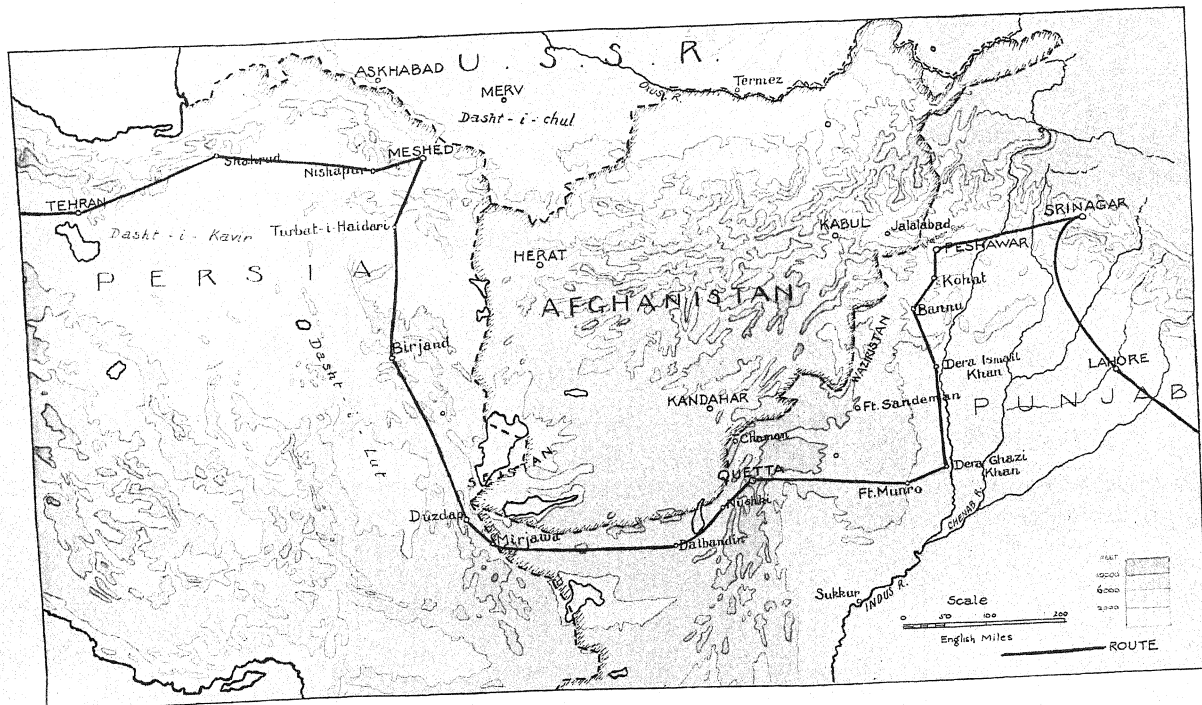
There was a considerable change, too, in our conditions of travelling, as we drove that day well into snow-clad heights, with considerable fear of a snow-storm, as we were seven thousand feet up, and our road itself was frequently soft and slippery with melted snows. But we came down without mishap to Samnan and the shelter of a decent motor *serai*. From there we could not take the new and more direct road for Tehrān, as it led back to the hills, and there were reports of its being snowed up. Our alternative was the old camel road, which was meant for camels and not for cars! After terribly rough going, it brought us once more into true Kavir; and there we stuck.

Perhaps the one advantage of our new-found friend's car was that, even if it stuck, it was light and easily rescued. But it was another matter to extricate our heavy four-seater, heavily laden, when, as here, it was landed in difficulties. In trying to avoid what looked like a very bad bit of mud and water on the track, we tried a small bridge over a ditch, broke it, and slid into the ditch. It took us more than two hours to dig and lift the car out; and, after all, the other car discovered that under the treacherous-looking water was a perfectly hard surface! We were all exhausted after our strenuous efforts, and glad to find a motor *serai* at Qishlaq, with a Persian meal supplied from the village *chai-khaneh*. The *serai* was the usual flat-topped dwelling of sun-dried mud, typical of a Persian village, which does not boast the stone houses of a town. We slept in the tower over its gateway—our cars pushed under an arched shelter that ran round the yard, with donkeys for company.

Soon after leaving Qishlaq we entered a weird gorge, of evil reputation, that ran through strangely coloured sulphur hills—an eerie spot, with a salt river that we had to cross at least a dozen times. Then we came out and up to high salt desert, and rose, past a strange white bog, to Aivan-i-Kif, where the German 'plane flew overhead on its easy trail to Meshed. An hour later we were in sight of Damavand, its volcanic peak towering, lovely in its mantle of snow, to more than eighteen thousand feet, like the familiar mountain of Japanese pictures. Twenty miles beyond, as we lunched on higher ground, we could see in the distance the big blue-domed mosque of Shah Abdul Azim, and within an hour we came to Tehrān, and so to the end of unknown ground, if not to the end of our journeying difficulties.

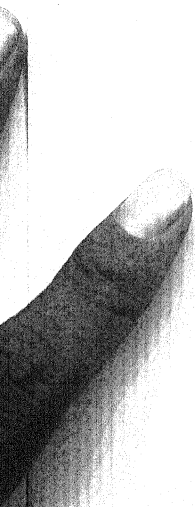


A 'bridge' on the Meshed-Tehrān road.



London, 1929.

III.—‘On the Fringes of Afghanistan’: route from Kashmir to Tehrān.



CHAPTER XVIII

FAREWELL TO PERSIA AND 1927

Itinerary: Tehrān, Kazvin, Aveh Pass, Hamadan, Asadabad Pass, Bisitun, Kermanshah, Karind, Pia Tak Pass, Kasr-i-Shirin, Khaniqin.

AT Tehrān we came again to the comfort of normal accommodation after our week of strange quarters since we left the luxury of Meshed; to cafés and cabarets even, and other long-lost evidences of civilisation. We came, too, to old ground and old friends in the diplomatic community of the capital; and, under the hospitality of the British minister and his wife, Sir Robert and Lady Clive, we were invited to their Christmas dinner to the Legation Staff—a strange contrast to the wayside ‘meals’ of our recent Persian wanderings.

Then there was the lure of Christmas shopping in the picturesque bazaars. These are in effect stretches of narrow street specially roofed over, with shops mere recesses in the street wall, and the main bazaar, though boasting a wider thoroughfare and larger shops, is on the same plan. The Lalezar, in the modern part of the city, is not roofed over and boasts even sidepaths and glass windows! There you have the ‘Rue de la Paix’ of Tehrān. But, for quaintness, one wants to see the native bazaar in the twilight, with the long dusky colonnades only half visible; the strange little figures of the donkeys, laden with huge panniers of bright-coloured fruit, and, each with a lamp on its back between the baskets, looking like enormous animated candle-sticks.

As in Meshed, we found it difficult to resist temptation, and our load was again the heavier by more rugs, old

Persian brocades and Isfahān silver—shopping 'loot' from the bazaars. The owner of the shop most patronised by us was also an official of the Tram Company of Tehrān. Fortunately the contents of his shop were much more attractive than his trams—witness 'inter alia' the flasks of a very wonderful Persian wine which he insisted on presenting to us—a more manageable cargo than the flagon which we had had to refuse at Nishapur!

The trams, however, are a distinctive feature of Tehrān. These three-horsed wonders clank along the Lalezar and elsewhere; and there are even a few miles of steam-tramway—Persia's nearest approach to a railway. It is true that not long since the Shah opened the 'Railway Station' in Tehrān with becoming ceremony, though the railway is still to be made! The making of it is in German hands, like the Aviation Service, which has its headquarters at Tehrān. This latter service is a striking example of conditions in Persia of to-day under Reza Shah Pehlevi. The situation is, of course, too well known to require elaboration here, but the change since our visit of 1925 was sufficiently marked to merit some comment.

It was just after our previous visit that this man of humble rank, who rose from the ranks to be Commander-in-Chief of the Persian Army, successfully dethroned the reigning Shah and was elected successor to the dynasty that had ruled—or increasingly misruled—Persia for more than a century and a half. British and Russian interests had long been rival in Persia; and, although the British were not without influence in securing his success, the danger of Bolshevik jealousy and interference is alleged by some to have induced in Reza Shah a strict impartiality towards the rival interests. In his energetic policy of national development he has studiously avoided the countries whose pronounced economic rivalry has long been a feature of his country, and has turned more and more to others of a safer economic neutrality. So it was that in Persia we found Americans as Financial Advisers, Belgians supervising Customs and, as we have already seen, both the Aviation Service and the contract for the

prospected railway from the Caspian to the Gulf in German hands.

There is at the same time a marked improvement in the general administration of the country. The substitution of peaked cap for fez is no meaningless formality but outward symbol of a very real movement towards Western efficiency, reflected most conspicuously in army organisation, the improvement of telegraph service, the introduction of up-to-date wireless plant, the abolition of internal tolls, factory regulations and a variety of such reforms, to which occasional allusion has been made.

Naturally in following our long trek through Persia we encountered a great variety of type, ranging from the wild Balūchi of Duzdāb in its south-eastern corner to the cultured and educated official whom we met more and more as we made our way along the northern line from Meshed to the capital. Among the uncultured, too, you get interesting contrasts like that between the sturdy, stocky peasant hillman of North Khurāsān and the Beduin desert type. But our main impression remains that of the Persian official, charming, courteous and hospitable in accordance with the age-old customs of the East.

Our road to the frontier took us past some of the sites and relics of the greatest glory of Persian history. We took that road with yet another addition to our personnel. This was a Maltese, officially a 'Distressed British Subject', whom the Sapper, in a moment of enthusiasm, agreed to convey to Beirūt for shipment thence to his island home. With trilby and suit but no overcoat, he looked to be destined, in those last days of December, to a chilly drive in the back of the Sapper's car—or even in the front, if Daffy condescended to let him have her seat, as the car, in its process of dismemberment, was by now without a wind-screen. Indeed our Maltese became such a picture of misery that he was unofficially christened the 'Depressed British Subject', and—more practically—outfitted with sundry gleanings from our wardrobes, my wife's included.

Beyond Tehrān, road conditions changed. The surface was now in the main excellent, the stretch to Kazvin having

been built by the Russians to connect Tehrān with Resht, on the Caspian. Some twenty miles beyond Kazvin another road runs north-west to Tabriz, but we bore south-west to Hamadan, along the road constructed from the frontier to Kazvin partly by the British Army of Mesopotamia. Our main fear was of snow in negotiating the high lands, as our route was mainly mountain-climbing to the Aveh Pass, with intermittent patches of rough and hilly going through gorges—complicated by seemingly endless strings of carts and camels, chiefly Bactrian. At the top of the Aveh Pass, nearly eight thousand feet up, the road was nothing but a cutting through the snow, which gleamed silver under the sun on every hand. As we came down, we encountered lorry after lorry stuck in its effort to do the climb, some from punctures, some from more serious engine trouble. Then, for the last thirty miles into the sunset and Hamadan, we were struck with the number of troop-transport lorries that we met, evidence of the disturbances in Khurāsān.

Hamadan itself is more than six thousand feet up, a summer resort on the slopes of the mountains. Our French-run hotel lay in one of its many lovely gardens across which we had to walk under bright, cold moonlight to our dinner. The morning was as bright and cold, with ice on the river and the streets frozen hard, the poplar trees ghost-like in their leaflessness with greenish-silver stems shining against the intense blue of sky, and all around the close girdle of snow-covered mountains.

No place, surely, could be more fitting as the accredited site of ancient Ecbatana, capital of the Empire of the Median mountaineers. As fittingly, it remained a summer residence of Persian kings after Cyrus established 'the law of the Medes and Persians that altereth not', and became again, with the passage of centuries, the capital of the resurgent Persia, which under its Parthian name made even the legions of mighty Rome tremble for fear.

Another hundred miles and we were at Bisitun under the shadow of the greatest relic of the greatness of ancient Persia. Again we came to it only with heavy climbing in

this land of plateaux and ranges, now deep with snow, which made our road very slippery in the shade, as we topped the Asadabad Pass at over seven thousand feet. Then down to its plain and past stretches of poppy-cultivation at the hill-set town of Kangavar; and at Saynah, smaller but more picturesque with its rose-hedges and fields of poppy, enchantingly pretty amid its orchards and brambles, even when its roses and poppies were far to seek at the close of the year. At Bisitun, better known perhaps to the Western world as Behistun, we gazed with something of awe at the cliff-cut monument to the glory of Darius the Great, the famous inscription which accomplished for the decipherment of Babylonian what the Rosetta Stone did for Egypt. It is, in fact, difficult to find, unless one knows just where to look for it; it is so high up that Philistine photography of it is quite a problem; and one marvels only the more at the achievement of Sir Henry Rawlinson in transcribing it and so furnishing the key that has unlocked for the world the still unexhausted storehouse of Assyriology.

Later, as one turns across the plain towards Kermanshah, there lies to the right, under the hill, Tak-i-Bustan with its like treasure of rock-carvings, less famous perhaps, and yet as worth a visit as those of Bisitun.¹

Kermanshah itself brought us abruptly back to the present with its masses of motor-cars and its Anglo-Persian Oil Company depot. The latter is served by rail to Khaniqin and thence by lorry along the road that we were to take, and so to Tehrān and the East. It serves too, normally, as the main Customs station westward, and a few miles out of it we resigned our Persian permits at the police post barrier, whence we had a lovely view back over the town, half hidden in mists of blue wood-smoke—the mountains across the valley behind rugged and snow-powdered.

Thence our way lay up and down across spur-valleys running off the main range parallel to our road. Its interest lay in the Kurds, whom we encountered here for the first

¹ See Flandin and Coste's *Voyage en Perse*, Paris, 1851.

time on this trip, in their village of Mahidista or road-mending along the track. Later, at Karind, we were held up by a puncture, and took the opportunity of buying quaint steel tools, locks, tongs etc., that they make there and sell in the street. Karind was at one time a rest-camp for our military forces occupying Mesopotamia and Western Persia during and after the Great War.

Our final height came at the top of the Pia Tak Pass, some four thousand feet. Four miles farther on we were looking back from the village to these hills, standing like great castellated walls shutting us out from the enchanted land of Persia.

By the time that we reached the frontier town of Kasri-Shirin it was already dark, and we were told that we could not go further because of the danger of robbers. However, on my giving a signed undertaking that we went at our own risk, and that if we were attacked by bandits we would not hold the Persians responsible, we were allowed to proceed. This we did after taking the precaution to load all our fire-arms—a proceeding that made my wife much more nervous than the actual prospect of the bandits, from her anxiety lest the jolting of the cars over rough and bumpy ground would make the fire-arms go off of their own accord!

A letter from the Belgian Chief of Customs at Tehrān made things easy for us at the toll-bars of Kosrovie, where our arrival brought the Customs official from his bed; and eventually, beyond a No Man's Land, we came to the police post on the Mesopotamian side and to an old friend in Mirza Ali, the Iraqi in charge of the post, who entertained us to coffee, while examining our passports. A little later we were amid the palm-trees of Khaniqin, hospitably lodged by Mr. Turner, the British official in charge of the Perso-Iraq frontier Customs, with whom we 'saw in the New Year', grateful to have accomplished our frontier palavers and to be once more under British control.

And yet it was by no means without regret that we bade our farewell alike to the year of our 'great adventure' and to the Persia that had given us a monthful of varied and in-

teresting experience. It was a strange contrast. For here we were on the vast, low-lying oil-field that is Iraq, with its all-pervading smell of oil and its skyline alight with flares. The same day, we had been crossing the Persian ranges from which we had now so suddenly and so surely tumbled on to almost unbroken plain. But for all the physical contrast, there was a great link of thought between the Persia that we had left and the country on which we were now entering, the link of the ageless past—a link that struck forcibly on the imagination at the dying of another year. For the young Iraq of oil-fields is latest heir to the Mesopotamia that cradled the world. We were on the skirts of what Professor Breasted calls the Fertile Crescent, where man first builded; and to north and south and east and west one had not far to seek not cities merely but empires that had waxed and waned through the millennia—Assyrian, Babylonian and Chaldaean, Median and Persian, Macedonian and Roman, Parthian and Sassanid, Mahomedan and Mongol. And we that night in Khaniqin were on territory mandated, after a world-war which those cities and empires could never have conceived, to a Power of which scarce one of them had ever heard.

Ample food for reflection on the eve of a new year. It would have suited well the imagination of a Firdusi who could trace Persia's glory from the creation of the world in a truly Persian medley of history and traditional legend. His own story is so striking an illustration of the mutability of human affairs that it is not an unfitting postscript to this account of our Persian wanderings. For his home was at Tuz, the ruins of which lie not far from Meshed; and there he wrote, a thousand years ago, his *Shah Nameh*,¹ which must stand as one of the greatest epics of all nations. Sixty thousand verses, for each of which Mahmud of Ghazni was to give him a golden dirhem. The work of thirty years accomplished, he was rewarded with silver instead of gold. With truly artistic contempt, he divided it between the bearer, his bath-attendant and a man who brought him a glass of beer. Then he indulged

¹ *I.e.* Book of Kings.

retaliation in a satire which became more famous than the epic itself. But he dared not stay to meet Mahmud's wrath. After years of wandering he returned, a broken old man, to die in his native city; and the story ends that, while his bier was being carried out at one gate, a caravan of costliest treasures sent by a repentant Mahmud entered the city by another gate—too late.

Surely his brother craftsman of Nishapur evolved an easier philosophy.

CHAPTER XIX

THE DESERT HIGHWAY

Itinerary: Kara Tepe, Kashem-el-Ahmar, Baghdad, Felujah, Ramadi, Rutbah Well, Damascus, Beirūt.

THE Diala river was in spate, the Baquba bridge-of-boats washed away and our direct road from the frontier to Baghdad accordingly barred. We had in consequence to make a detour of some sixty miles to the north, which, while lengthening our journey yet again, gave us the opportunity of visiting the new oil-fields of the Turkish Petroleum Company in the direction of Kirkuk.

Leaving Khaniqin after noon, we had hoped to make Kashem-el-Ahmar the same night. But after edging more to the north to avoid one of the inevitable dust-storms, we decided to halt at Kara Tepe for the night rather than risk losing our way in the dark on unknown ground where tracks were hard enough to follow by daylight. Kara Tepe is a small desert town, little more than an oasis; and we enjoyed a typically desert evening, with a sunset, lovely as they are after rain, and against that sunset the mud houses and palms of this desert oasis. A room in the Police 'Post', the guard-room, was cleared for our benefit; and there once again the four of us had our quarters in common, sleeping on the floor on our valises.

Some twenty miles' run brought us early next morning to 'Roger's Curve', 'New York City' and other strange notices, such as 'See Los Angeles first'. The key to these we found, when we arrived at Kashem-el-Ahmar and encountered some American oil-drillers, who were full of interest in being visited by any strangers, and particularly enthralled on hearing that 'these folk come from "Pek-

kin", China', as one of them explained to his friends. They repaid interest by showing us one of the new bores where they were hoping to strike oil at any moment. Only a few weeks earlier they had suddenly struck oil in such volume that it had taken them nearly twenty days to cap it; and in that time the whole country-side for miles around had been swimming in oil. Incidentally we learnt that this flooding led to endless complications with the natives, who made claim for damages to their land—land that was in many cases probably little more than desert! We were told, too, of more serious troubles from such a flooding, as the oil gives off a colourless non-smelling gas, and two of our hosts' colleagues had died from the effects of a quantity of this gas lying in a fold of the ground between their work and their sleeping-quarters.

Here we were on the fringes of Southern Kurdistan and the Tigris valley. A few miles and we were out on the great plain of Iraq—perfectly flat desert, with true Beduin camps and hundreds of camels for proof of it. At times the track was hard to come by, and at one point we went astray amongst plough-land. Then, with sign-posts making our direction clear, we found the well-worn desert track leading to Baghdad and could at last cover ground at a rate of more than fifty miles an hour! Soon we could see in the clear distance ten miles ahead the golden dome of the Mosque of Khadimain. A little later we were ensconced in the Carlton Hotel—more luxurious quarters than those of the previous night, and picturesque of setting if not equal to its London namesake in all its appointments. Our bedroom boasted a marble floor, and opened on a big flat roof running out to the edge of the Tigris and the loveliness of another desert sunset.

In Baghdad we met many old friends who during the five days of our stay did not allow us to suffer boredom for lack of hospitality and amusement. The warmth of our welcome, however, scarcely counteracted the intensity of the cold. In fact, at one of our entertainments we danced simply to keep warm, and eventually sat with rugs over our knees, even though a fire was burning; and our bed-

rooms were bearable only with braziers burning continually. It was certainly the opposite extreme to the climate that one more normally associates with Baghdad.

Having taken aboard the necessary supplement of stores, we were ready for another desert journey. Just as the motor traffic of Baghdad showed a remarkable increase, so the desert-crossing itself was very different from that of our visit in 1925, and a very much simpler, if less interesting, feat than the crossing I had made in 1923, when the practicability of such a journey was still a matter of doubt.

It was in the spring of that year that Mr. Palmer, the then British Consul at Damascus, and I made the reconnaissance of a desert route from Damascus to Baghdad and back, the success of which induced the Nairn Transport Company to establish a regular motor service across the Syrian Desert. To-day that service is a feature of international travel. There is not space to elaborate its details, but a few points by way of explanation may be permitted. A more detailed account of its inception was given in a lecture to the Central Asian Society, in whose journal the lecture was published. On that original pioneer crossing our official convoy was accompanied by another car in which were travelling four adventurous British women, who thus achieved the distinction of being the first white women to cross the desert by car from the Mediterranean to Baghdad. One of these ladies, now my wife, was, as we have seen, a member of the more ambitious expedition which forms the subject of this book.

We had as guide on that pioneer journey a wealthy Baghdad merchant, by name Mahommed Ibn Bassam. He had been running a contraband trade in gold between Syria and Iraq, using naturally the least frequented route—one that ran from Damascus to Deir-ez-Zor on the Euphrates, and thence down that river to Felujah and on to Baghdad. He maintained, however—and our attempt proved him right—that it would be possible to drive direct from Damascus to Iraq without touching any habitations nearer to Syria than Ramadi, which is on the Euphrates,

some seventy miles west of Baghdad, and in an almost direct east and west line between Damascus and Baghdad.

That was the original route of 1923, and that is the route in regular use to-day. Then it was an adventure; to-day, with the precautions insisted on by the authorities concerned, it is a commonplace.

To resume our westward journey—these precautions began at Baghdad, at the Fire Brigade Station, with tests of car fitness, equipment etc. Then after the Customs examination at Baghdad West we proceeded, crossed the Euphrates by the bridge-of-boats at Felujah, and halted for the night at Ramadi. There have been times when, with the Euphrates in flood, the bridge-of-boats has been cut to save its being washed away; but, with the regular service, suitable ferry arrangements have been made against such difficulties. On our present journey we were faced with a new difficulty at Ramadi. On account of an epidemic of cholera in Iraq, we were forced to stay overnight in the Quarantine Station, under the supervision of a native Iraqi doctor—trained, incidentally, in Aberdeen. As a great favour we were allowed out of the Station to dine with the Political Officer in his house a few yards away. Next morning we found that, in spite of the stringent quarantine regulations, our Indian servants had been sent by the medical staff into the native town, the only possible danger spot, on some trivial errand.

Ramadi itself was strangely changed. Instead of the old police post on the little bridge outside, which constituted all the frontier control there was when we were last there, we now encountered an enormous collection of buildings forming a great barrier right across the exits of the town. In the middle of the buildings there is a sort of 'Marble Arch', somewhat in the style of one of the big gates of Peking. Forming part of this barrier are the Customs Offices, the Police Quarters, the Quarantine Authorities' Offices and a large Hospital and Quarantine Station combined—the whole built of stone. The archway itself is officially called 'The Gateway to the Desert'; and this it certainly is, as there are no means of circumventing

the barrier at either end, and to emerge on to the desert every car is compelled to go through the Gateway. The Iraq authorities have a cunning of their own.

Through the Gateway—and one is really out on the desert, with the prospect of more than four hundred miles of desert run to Dumair, broken only by Rutbah Well, nearly two hundred miles distant. It is only natural, therefore, that one should still take precautions for such a journey, even though the route has now developed into an international highway. So, of these precautions, a word.

It is still against police regulations, British and French, to travel except in convoy. Two cars furnish the minimum; and our expedition of three cars, fully equipped in the matter of supplies—fuel and spares, arms and ammunition, food and the all-important item of water—was allowed to proceed.

The idea of the convoy is at the least twofold. It is not impossible for single cars to make the journey; indeed, they have done so on several occasions. But it is obviously a dangerous undertaking on account of the distance that a car would have to travel without any certain hope of help in the event of trouble. The schedule of supplies shows that mechanical trouble is not the only risk. It must be remembered that the westerly half of the route crosses the north-and-south track of the nomad Beduins. It lies, in fact, just south of the usual summer pasturage grounds and to the north of the areas that they frequent in winter months. Ibn Bassam chose it as the least-frequented route; and in the earlier years the use of guides from one of the Beduin tribes of the vicinity was a safeguard against attack. With the popularisation of the route, the Beduin is becoming more and more inured to this strange intrusion on his preserves, and guides are not now normally employed. But to travel unprepared would be sheer folly. It is not so many months since one of the Nairn convoys was 'shot up'. These raiding parties—raiding often 'inter se'—move only from well to well; otherwise they would be waterless and finished. It is, therefore, a law of this desert travel to camp away from the wells.

Another precautionary rule of the desert-crossing is that one should *stop* if one comes to grief. This may sometimes be making a virtue of necessity; but, in coming to grief, I include the very possible mishap of losing the track. It is imperative, then, either to double back on one's tracks if these are clearly traced, or obey the rule and stop where one is. In these days especially it is the safest way of getting help; to wander further afield would only make the task of rescuers more complicated.

A simple precaution, but one not without its value, is that of telegraphing news of one's departure and arrival to opposite ends of the route. It was a precaution adopted on our original journey, and it is still maintained.

There is a further comment on the crossing that seems necessary, as the nature of the route is not generally appreciated. 'The desert' does not mean a vast expanse of soft sand and sand-dunes. Except for the first forty miles westward out of Ramadi, one encounters practically no sand of any description. For those forty miles the going is through calcareous sand and loam soil with a stony covering, which, in a few places only, is rather soft, and through which vehicles should follow the tracks already hardened by the passage of previous traffic.

The question is often raised as to why this route is not pursued through British territory; the answer is not far to seek. Such a course would involve crossing Trans-Jordania, and would entail in its western part the passage of a belt, sixty miles wide, of rough lava country over which the going is painfully slow and dangerous—and, as such, commercially uneconomic—for automobiles. Further, the so-called road from Amman to the Jordan is in winter frequently impassable owing to rains, while the road used on the normal route from Damascus to Beirūt is of good macadamised surface; and finally, Beirūt itself is a terminal port for various steamship companies, and, as such, of much greater utility as the terminus of the land route than the Palestinian ports of Haifa and Jaffa.

After something of digression, we may revert to what

is, in effect, a very excellent motoring track. Normally, of course, the journey is broken, but the 603 miles from Baghdad to Beirūt have been done in 16 hours 53 minutes. This, incidentally, was for a bet; but it does serve to show the high speeds attainable across the desert with reliable cars. Indeed, a great danger is that of the driver's being overcome by a sleepiness begotten of monotony, as he forges ahead, mile after mile, over seemingly unbroken level. There are other snags, of which something in a moment. Rain, of course, makes this wonderful track a quagmire very quickly; but the speed with which the soil dries after a really heavy rainfall is only another of its extraordinary features. There is, however, with the great increase in the size and volume of the motor traffic, a tendency for the track to become cut up when wet, and its well-defined width is gradually assuming dangerously indefinite margins.

On this particular journey, in the early days of the New Year, we experienced rain as well as bitter wind; but, in spite of rain, and repeated waits for the Sapper's car, we arrived at Rutbah Well just as night was falling. There, with a wisdom born of experience, we stayed overnight, unlike some American ladies whom we shall overtake later, whose less experienced driver thought he knew better.

Rutbah amazed us. When we last passed that way there was nothing more than the three small stones which marked the only well in the four hundred odd miles between Ramadi and Dumair. Now there had sprung up an enormous fortified compound, comprising a Government rest-house, the Customs Authorities, a strong police detachment, a wireless-telegraph post, an Imperial Airways station, a Royal Air Force meteorological post, and a large covered garage. Just outside the main entrance to the fort is the Imperial Airways' landing-ground. Such is now the desert well! But the change, if astonishing, was very comforting. After the rain and bitter cold, instead of having to spend the hours of darkness camping in the wet, we were provided in the fort with warm rooms, comfortable

beds, and abundance of hot water, and sat down to an exceedingly good dinner—in summer even ice is provided! The rest-house is run, and well run, by an Englishman—under Nairns'; and Imperial Airways have two mechanics stationed there. These men are not as lonely as one might imagine, as motor-convoys and aeroplanes are continually passing through. Indeed, from being a comparatively uninhabited desert across which we wandered the first time in some trepidation, this desert route has now become a veritable highway, so clearly defined by sign-boards and the tracks of the many thousands of cars that have been across it that it is, with the reservation I have suggested, almost impossible now to lose one's way, even though unaccompanied by a guide or anyone who can speak Arabic. The desert may not blossom as the rose, but the rough places have in many ways been made plain.

But trouble is still possible. A hundred miles out from Rutbah we overtook a broken-down car with its helpless native driver and, amongst its occupants, the two American ladies whom we had previously met. They had unwisely preferred the false economy of this native car to the dearer reliability of one of Nairns' luxurious six-wheeler saloons. How the driver had evaded the tests of the Police Control at Baghdad, I do not know. Then, in place of staying overnight in the comfort and safety of Rutbah, he had insisted on 'carrying on', with the result that, as a lone native driver—Nairns' men always work in pairs—he had fallen asleep at his wheel from sheer fatigue at 2 A.M. Worse than that, he had left his car standing just as it was, instead of turning its back to the wind, and consequently in the morning found it completely frozen up and quite impossible to move. Our friends, relying on the warmth of a 'limousine', and unused to the icy cold of the desert, had endured nine hours of that exposure in quite inadequate clothes. It took us some considerable time, towing the car in circles round the desert, to coax his derelict engine back to life, and that only after ousting the native from his steering-wheel, which must have passed the official test

of fitness by some miracle of oversight, as its column had come completely adrift from the rest of the car! Such are the pitfalls of the unwary!

Our own troubles were to come. After a puncture on the two-seater, its battery was completely knocked out of its place through striking an unexpected stone. The repair of this occupied the valuable hours till sunset. Then we overtook the Sapper's car. This proceeded to develop a seemingly endless series of punctures, which kept us hung up for hours into the night, when we were nearing Damascus and the hilly regions frequented by bandits. We had supper at midnight of one of the coldest nights we had ever experienced anywhere; and finally reached the Damascus Quarantine Station at 2 A.M. There, my wife refusing to join the vague 'women' in the women's ward, we all shared the same room, rolling ourselves in our sheep-skins, and putting our valises on top of the hospital beds to counteract any legacies from previous inhabitants.

Early next morning we were visited by friends from Damascus, including Mr. Norman Nairn, who had gone some distance out into the desert to meet us on the previous night, until at 10 o'clock he had given us up in despair. He brought us an enormous mail from Beirût, and I think that we showed such comfortable enjoyment of our enforced seclusion, reading and resting, that, in very chagrin or surprise, the French authorities released us long before the regulation time of quarantine expired. Soon after noon, we were ensconced in our hotel in Damascus, where we stayed three days, again renewing many old friendships.

Having served as British Liaison Officer in Syria for more than four years from 1920, there is so much that one could say that I feel it would be unwise to embark on any comment on Syrian affairs. Space forbids here any account of them that I should consider satisfactory; and I feel compelled to refer any who may be interested to a lecture on Syrian affairs of those years delivered to the Central Asian Society in the autumn of 1924—and published in its journal—and to a recent article in the *Asiatic Review* of April 1929, dealing with Syria's more recent history.

It would be unwise to dogmatise without adequate explanation and in a few brief pages—if even these were available—on the subject of France and the Syrian mandate; of her resignation of Cilicia to Turkey on grounds of economy against the advice of her local officers; of the frequent changes of her Syrian High Commissioners; or, to go further east, of Great Britain's establishing on the throne of Iraq the man whom the French found it necessary to drive from Damascus. The consideration of these among many other questions is obviously beyond the scope of a book that has to range in its brief compass from China to Chelsea.

But Damascus will ever remain for me the most fascinating city in the world, fascinating in its age-old history, in its outward appearance and in its hidden life of unending intrigue. They say that the whisper of a Damascus bazaar is common knowledge of the Desert within twenty-four hours. And that, I suppose, has been the life and breath of it throughout the ages, this cockpit of the East, which still stands, after its four thousand years of unchanging change, the oldest surviving city of the world.

Since our previous visit there had been another of those Druse rebellions which first interested France in Syrian affairs. Those, too, will go on, I suppose, as long as a small corner of the earth such as that boasts some thirty religious sects, and as long as men fight in the name of their god or gods. Actually we found Damascus quite peaceful after the long months of weary agitation through which it had been passing, though it was very sad to see the large areas of the town which had been destroyed by bombardment or cleared away by the French military, to remove many of the old hiding-places from the shelter of which the rebels used to fire. Some day, presumably, it will all be rebuilt; but it looked, as we saw it then, more like a military camp surrounded by every sort of entrenchment and barbed-wire entanglement than the old Damascus that we knew and liked so well.

Twenty miles out we were on the battle-field of Khan-Meiseloun, where, in 1920, Feisal's twenty thousand

Beduin tribesmen bolted from their impregnable position before the onslaught of the numerically much weaker but better disciplined Senegalese troops. Through the gorge of Wadi-el-Korm, over Anti-Lebanon—and from the top of Lebanon we had our first view for many years of the blue waters of the Mediterranean. An hour later we were in Beirūt and at the end of what we regarded as the second stage of our journey.

CHAPTER XX

SORROWS IN SYRIA

Itinerary: Beirût, Tripoli, Latakia, Jisr esh Shughur, Aleppo, Bailan, Alexandretta, Turkish Frontier, Deurtyol, Deli Chai.

WE had achieved the second main stage of our journey on which we had reason to congratulate ourselves—and our cars, as we had completed over ten thousand miles and they were running just as well as when we started from Peking. Over that distance our total breakages had been: on the two-seater, none at all; on the four-seater, a broken speedometer-cable, which was replaced immediately from spares, and one leaf in a front-spring which was broken just before reaching Baghdad and replaced there in a very few minutes. This was a reasonably good record of performance under the heavy loads that the cars had to carry.

On the other hand, we reached this stage exactly four months in arrear of scheduled time; and this delay was at the moment causing us considerable anxiety, as I was actually due back with my regiment at Tientsin in three months' time, and it was not until we had been in Beirût for three weeks that I received approval from the War Office of a few months' extension of my leave, for which I had applied in order to make the completion of our journey home a possibility. Failing that extension, unless I were 'absent without leave', we should obviously have had to abandon the rest of the journey and return from Beirût direct to China, which seemed something of bathos after we had reached thus far at considerable expenditure of money, time and energy. It seemed the more vexatious as most of this four months' delay was due, as previously explained, to our having had to start from Peking at an

unsuitable time of year and to encounter in consequence the prevalently adverse conditions of climate of which the previous chapters have given some idea.

And these adverse conditions were by no means over. Rain, in fact, held us up in Beirūt for five weeks before we could start out on the final stage of our journey, as we knew from experience that it was hopeless to think of attempting the roads to Northern Syria—let alone those of Anatolia—under conditions of rain.

Irksome as the delay was we were in safety and in comfort, enjoying the exceedingly kind hospitality of our old friends, the British Consul-General, Mr. Satow, and his wife, in their spacious new Consulate. Beirūt, as the scene of my former labours, had abundance of interest and ties. It seemed to us much the same as ever except that a certain amount had been done to widen the streets and improve traffic circulation in the town. For this there was ample need, especially with the innovation of the taximeter. The addition to the normal motor traffic of hundreds of taxi-cabs running about all over the place—a place never designed to such ends—has created such a density of traffic that driving through Beirūt is, to-day, more reminiscent of the speed and noise and danger of Paris than of an oriental town.

Till the end of the month we were—entertainment apart—well occupied with the records of our accomplished journey and preparations against the future. These latter involved correspondence with Mr. Hough, British Consul at Aleppo, as regards securing a guide; with Mr. Catoni, British Consul at Alexandretta, with whose help we were endeavouring to overcome what appeared formidable difficulties as to our passage through Turkey; with the British Consul at Mersina, on whom we relied for weather reports on Anatolia—and discouraging they were. Finally, correspondence with the Automobile Association in London, opened in Calcutta as long previously as October, brought us a mail of documents at Beirūt relative to Triptyque facilities for the European section of our contemplated route. These involved, 'inter alia', driving tests

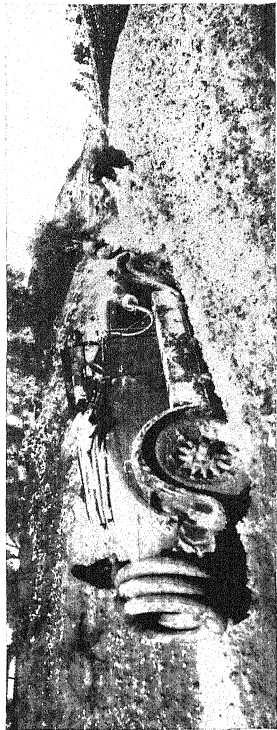
for our party, which we had to carry out in Beirūt under Mr. Satow, as Consul-General.

Whether the Sapper at the wheel of his dismembered car would have satisfied authority, we were not called upon to prove, as we had already bidden our regretful farewells to him, Daffy and the recalcitrant 'Olive', the name under which his 'tyre-less' steed made her weary, overland wanderings. With them, too, we lost sight of the 'depressed' Maltese together with Williams' raincoat! But the most regretful of our expeditionary farewells were those to Hussein and Babuzai, whom we saw aboard ship at Beirūt on their homeward way, and of whose safe arrival in their respective homes we have since had confirmation. Of their value the preceding chapters should have given ample proof; of our loss we were to have evidence only too soon.

The weeks, therefore, were not without occupation; but, when the end of January saw us ready but still compelled to wait, we felt that we could not presume longer on the hospitality of our hosts and adjourned to Damascus, and later to a Beirūt hotel, even indulging a brief sojourn in Egypt to pass the weary days of waiting. Neither the Pigeon Rocks under a spell of moonlight, nor the lovely view from Brumana were of much solace, when we were longing for a sight of Konia's plain from the heights of Taurus, if not of the Bosphorus from the slopes of Olympus.

At last, on the 20th of February, having allowed a few days' sunshine to dry the tracks, we said farewell to our kind friends and made our way north. Unfortunately for our plans, just as we were leaving Beirūt the rain began again and, as we crossed its river, the mountains were almost hidden in rain and mist.

It is an interesting and attractive road, and, in spite of mist, we had a fine view of the sea, greenish blue and big of wave, with picturesque boats drawn up in its little inlets. It is a road of relics and memories, Roman, Crusader and many another, although there is often a jarring note of modernity, as in the modern café marring the old Roman bridge over the Dog River at Ras-el-Kelb. Afterwards the



The 'road' from Latakia to Aleppo in February 1928.

clouds lifted, as we wound by the wonderful 'Corniche' road round Ras Esh Shekka (Cap Madonna), the sky Turneresque above a sea of lovely colour, and the hill-side redolent with the after-scents of rain. But it was falling in torrents as we came through the olive and orange groves that heralded the approach to Tripoli.

Tripoli should, I suppose, evoke Crusading memories of Raymond of Toulouse and many another; but I am afraid we felt that we had our own cross to bear, as we listened to the howling of a stormy night and awoke to the sounds of a deluge. We nearly decided against going on; but, in spite of a lowering sky and high wind, we went, with a hail-storm of big stones for final benediction. Bearing left along the Latakia road, we were soon crossing the boundary between the Lebanon and the État des Allouites. Our courage was rewarded with sunshine and we could see, as we approached Tartus, the convict island of Ruad lying seawards on our left. Under the shadow of the great old Crusader castle of Kalaat Markab we came to the picturesque village of Banias and the old French barracks of the Légion Syrienne troops. Then, lunch in a thunder-storm, and a further twenty-five miles to Latakia in glorious sunshine!

At Latakia, the rain came down for four days incessantly, enough to have flooded Herod the Great's aqueduct in days when it was more water-tight than its ruins are to-day. The whole country-side was flooded, and, as we waited patiently for a break in the downpour, we wiled away the hours, appropriately enough, with games of Patience—experience had long since taught us the necessity of including playing-cards in our kit for moments such as these. Day after day went by, but the rain never ceased. Almost in despair, I sought solace in urgent inquiries about our onward track to Aleppo, and in special preparations for what was, after these rains, likely to prove a strenuous bit of going. In making these preparations I was most generously assisted by Monsieur Schoeffler, the Governor, an old friend of my Syrian days.

The projected macadamised road to Aleppo had been

completed for some thirty miles out of Latakia. Then followed a stretch of another thirty miles over which the road construction had been begun; the earth *terrassement* had been prepared, but no metal had yet been laid. For the last seventy-two miles from Jisr esh Shughur to Aleppo, again, the macadamised road had been practically completed. Knowing, therefore, something of what our difficulties were likely to be over those thirty miles of unfinished road, we engaged a team of six mules, with the necessary muleteers, sending them some thirty miles ahead to await our start from Latakia.

At last, on the fifth day of our stay in Latakia, the weather improved, and we started out for Aleppo, having already sent our new guide on the previous day to warn the muleteers at Khan-el-Joz not to go on, as we were held up for another day. On the first stretch we had little trouble beyond the obstruction of a land-slide in the valley of the Nahr-el-Kabir with its steep-sided gorge. Our real trouble began within the thirty miles, on our encountering a truck bogged ahead of us coming downhill. We had to send for the mules and put them on to tow this truck out of the fairway. Then, with the help of the mules and building up the holes in the road, we contrived to bring both our cars through the first stretch of deep mud.

From then onwards the mules were in more or less constant requisition. After five hours we had covered ten miles; four miles further on we were, again with their help, crossing the stream that forms the frontier of Les Allouites—État de Syrie. By this time night had fallen. Another four miles, and the plough, or slough, of our *terrassement* ended in a deep ravine at the bottom of which was a swift-running mountain-stream, which we were due to cross.

Here there was an old mill on the other side of the stream, and the Arabs were very anxious that we should stay there overnight. Williams and I accordingly went to investigate, leaving the cars on a piece of good firm track on a downward slope towards the stream. Investigation decided us on the impossibility of crossing the stream in the dark. The cars were therefore moved to a reasonably

level spot, where they were covered over with the tarpaulins, and where they remained under charge of a native gendarmerie patrol, and in perilous proximity to the camp-fire that the patrol-guard lit. We adjourned across the stream to our strange quarters in the mill, my wife being carried across by our Arab guide, as there was nothing in the way of bridge. Climbing the rocky path to the mill we found it already occupied by mules and muleteers, and very smoky. There was only one room, roughly eighteen feet by fifteen; and there we all crowded: four British, four Arab muleteers, two Arab gendarmes, one Arab guide, six mules, two horses, and one small, friendly black-and-white kitten who apparently owned the mill. The animals were tethered at one end, and we had our bedding-rolls at the other. After some warming drink, and cold food which we had to share with the muleteers who had none of their own, we contrived to sleep in spite of disagreements between mules and horses and of the arrivals during the night of various gendarmes and villagers ordered by the French to proceed to our assistance. Although it was snowing heavily outside throughout the night, it will not be difficult to realise that the atmosphere within had a warmth of its own; but, lying low on our bed-rolls, we at least escaped the thick wood-smoke from the fire—and, even in such strange company, animal and human, we met no 'little friends'.

But we sorely missed Hussein and Babuzai, especially in the morning, as we struggled with our packing and breakfasted off cold meat and bread and tepid tea from a rather inadequate, if 'unbreakable', thermos flask, with tantalising memories of Hussein's hot breakfasts of sausages and eggs and of Babuzai's valeting skill.

This was at six o'clock on a Sunday morning. Snow was falling outside. At seven, we started up the cars and eventually brought them across the stream under their own power. It was an awkward job, as one had to manoeuvre and accelerate just at the right second: at the same time one had to be careful not to take them across too fast for risk of crashing on the rocks. The worst difficulty lay

in taking the slippery, rocky face of the further bank at its angle of 45° . The second car, in fact, stuck in its attempt; but fortunately the brakes held—all praise to them—and in time both were safely over. By half past eight we were loaded up and under way. It had apparently been snowing all night, but soon after this it cleared, and at least we had it dry overhead.

We still had the help of the gendarmes, who had been sent out by their French officer in Jisr esh Shughur to protect us overnight, and who now went ahead to collect additional local aid. That—and more—was needed before this nightmare of a day was over.

To begin with, the track ran along a precipice above the valley, and, at the narrowest and greasiest part, we found our road blocked by a landslide. That had to be dug away, and the cars towed in turn by the mules along this bit. At one moment it looked as if one of the cars was going right over the edge of the precipice, the ledge was so narrow, and the path so slippery. Fortunately, Lovell and Williams, besides being extraordinarily good drivers, have excellent heads for heights and are never turned giddy, as I am, by precipices; to them we owed the safe guiding of both cars across that slippery stretch where the slightest misadventure must have sent either car over the edge. We had difficult places to negotiate all day, but none as really difficult as that.

By noon, having covered barely seven miles, we were met by Lieutenant Blondel, the French officer from Jisr esh Shughur, who invited us to lunch and a little later went ahead to prepare for our reception. Five hours afterwards he reappeared, wondering what had happened, and found us scarcely four miles further on! One of the cars had stuck in an extra deep patch of mud, and it had taken us four hours to get it out, and that only after unloading it, filling the ditch with stones so that the car could leave the track at an incline, and then, having to fill up with stones under the car, when the mules stopped pulling and it slipped back into the ditch. Instead of our promised *déjeuner*, we broke our fast on dry figs and Arab bread,



'Full speed ahead through Syrian mud.'

flavoured with red pepper, cheese and onions—very hot to eat, but very welcome.

Later—and by then it was dark—we found two enormous gaps in the ‘road’, where it was obviously intended to build bridges. It was impossible, with cliff on one side and precipice on the other, to leave the track. Willy-nilly, we had to run or, rather, guide the cars very gently across, by means of some iron girders lying on the side of the track and presumably part of the bridge-building material. The second car slipped off one of the girders and fell half into the gap: then we had to fill the hole by commandeering all the available stone of which the bridge was to be made. I do not know what the road-makers said when they came, but our cheerful French officer said that it was all right for us to use it. ‘*Ils n’ont pas le droit de couper la route comme ça*’, he insisted vigorously, as he helped us to fill in the hole. It was hard labour with a vengeance after the whole day’s labour, and we were so physically exhausted that we were almost searching round for smaller stones to heave in rather than lift the larger ones that might be lying closer to hand.

After surviving this contretemps, we came at last in sight of Jisr esh Shughur, and seemed to be advancing well, when both cars stuck once more in a very deep mud hole, where progress was again arrested. The mules had by now gone on to stable in the town; and my wife and I, accompanied by Lieutenant Blondel, waded thither through the mud. As it was already nine o’clock, I left her in the shelter of the officer’s house, and with his help retrieved our mules, collected most of the townsfolk, and returned with him to the scene of operations. The mules, alas, were almost completely exhausted. They had worked strenuously for two days—and we found out afterwards, without any fodder; such is the way of muleteers. It was little wonder that they pulled badly, and without the simultaneity that wins through. Still, with the aid of the townsfolk and much bad language on our part, they did win through. At last at one o’clock in the morning we were enjoying our belated hot dinner in the dry and warm comfort of

our host's house. What we should have done without his help and that of his gendarmerie—let alone his hospitality—I cannot conceive. It had taken us eighteen hours to cover those eighteen kilometres.

It was raining hard the following morning, as we left Jisr esh Shughur by the old Roman bridge spanning the still older Orontes. Our road was now—comparatively—good, and we covered the seventy odd miles to Aleppo without further trouble. We had spent three days on the journey from Latakia to Aleppo, which, under normal conditions, would have been a good afternoon's run. The cars were unrecognisable, almost hidden under the mud that had adhered to them in those few days, and it needed another three days to give them a thorough cleaning and overhauling. The latter proved, however, that in spite of the gruelling strains of that thirty miles of waterlogged track, they were none the worse for their experience.

We ourselves were nothing loth to enjoy a few days' respite, but we were not unoccupied. Further arrangements had to be made with the Turkish Consul in Aleppo to complete the formalities necessary for crossing into Turkey; and we took the opportunity of obtaining a certain amount of Turkish money in case it should be necessary to pay a Customs deposit on the cars when entering Turkey, of which we shall hear again.

These preparations all took time, even under the good auspices of the Governor, and with the help of Mr. Hough, the British Consul. Still, we had some leisure to enjoy Aleppo, even in a cold that was of an intensity—especially at night—to recall Peking. That is characteristic of Aleppo. Unlike the Laodicea of the Scriptures, it is either hot or cold, with the result that it never knows the welcome green to which we are so accustomed at home. We spent a morning visiting the 'Citadelle', a wonderful place dating back to the Roman period or earlier. The Arab fortifications built in Saladin's time are still intact, as is also the great entrance slope up which one could picture the Saracens of old riding several abreast. From the top there is a marvellous view in every direction,





The hour of prayer in an Aleppo mosque.

giving one a good impression of the great size of the Arab city, which stretches away on its eastern side. Then there is always the fascination of the *Souks*—as the bazaars are called. They may not be as busy as they were when Aleppo was the great mart on the caravan routes between the Mediterranean and Anatolia, Kurdistan and Northern Persia. A hundred years ago Egypt threatened to exterminate what the great earthquake and cholera had left to her. She suffered again in the Great War; and her trade has largely gone. But her bazaars are still the home of Turco-Arabian intrigue. She is still the home of Armenian refugee and fanatic Moslem. She lies sixteen miles from the frontier, but the Baghdad Railway darts a dangerous arrow-head into French Syria, with its point at Aleppo, and that is the thoroughfare for Turkish troops moving between Western and Eastern Anatolia. What more could you wish for intrigue—in an Asiatic city which once knew Turkish rule and has not yet forgotten her Turkish sympathies? 'Haleb' may still make history.

In the light of such intrigue and possible trouble, we had, in our preparations, been at pains to acquire a guide who should be an Arab Moslem and not Turkish or Armenian refugee. For languages we hoped that he would 'have' Turkish, Arabic and French, if not English. Ghaleb Mukhtar professed these qualifications, and we took him aboard at Aleppo as our new interpreter for the Anatolian journey. Furnished with guide and Turkish visas, we set out for the frontier by way of Alexandretta and the frontier post of Deurtyol.

Shortly after leaving Aleppo, we had a glorious view of the snow-covered mountains, and came on familiar ground at the monument put up to the British Imperial Cavalry Brigade on the scene of the last engagement with the Turks in the World War. It had a particular interest for me, as I was present when, after its destruction by Feisal's 'grateful' Arabs, it was restored through the instrumentality of General Gouraud and unveiled by him in the presence of a detachment of Indian Cavalry, survivors of the Imperial Brigade.

Later we were running by the southern end of the Kurd Dagħ near the Turkish frontier, west of Katma. Thirty miles beyond, as we came to old Kasr-el-Hammam, with its Roman mound and famous baths, we saw the lake of Antioch in the distance against its background of blue, uneven mountains. Soon, we were skirting the foot of the Amanus mountains, and a few miles later climbing in a series of snake-like curves with a lovely view back over Antioch lake and the winding valley where the ancient city lies. On over the Bailan Pass, with its village so steeply set, and the view of the Taurus mountains and sunset sky reflected in a glassy sea—and so into Alexandretta.

We are always inclined to think of our friend, Mr. Catoni, more as Iskanderun's uncrowned king than as Consul. He is a great host, with a fund of enthralling tales of his experiences there during the time of the Turkish massacre of the Armenians, when, owing to his initiative, a British man-o'-war arrived first on the scene and in time to protect them. We were to know something of hospitality *chez* Monsieur et Madame Catoni, as, with the fate that seemed to be dogging us so strangely, we trespassed on their kindness for eleven days instead of two—the why and wherefore of which makes this chapter, like its itinerary, considerably longer than it should have been.

After a day's grace in Alexandretta, we set out for the frontier under the warm sun and cloudless sky of a glorious morning, with the sea of the Gulf a pale sapphire near, and deep when rippled in the distance; the Turkish coast a line of mauvish blue and the Taurus beyond a ghostly white against the pale sky. In a few miles we were past the old relic known as 'Jonah's Pillar', piercing the rocky headland-cutting that is the 'Syrian Gates'. Fourteen miles out, we came to the Turkish frontier-post of Payas in a beautiful grove of giant olive-trees, with the road beyond running through the Castle keep. After some delay the Turkish frontier officer *visé'd* our passports and accompanied us on the intervening miles to the Customs post at Deurtyol.

Here began our chapter of 'Trouble on the Turkish Front'. The Turkish authorities in Syria had told us that the Government at Angora had been notified of our intended journey, and that the expedition would be allowed to enter Turkey without having to pay Customs dues. But, in case we might have to pay a deposit on the cars, our friends advised us to have ready money with us. We understood that a maximum of £400 (Turkish) per car was the normal import duty for cars similar to ours. Hence our arrangements at Aleppo, by which we had provided ourselves with some £T.1100, and, therefore, as we thought, with a goodly margin against eventualities.¹

At Deurtyol, however, the Customs authorities denied all knowledge of us and insisted on payment of a Customs deposit on the cars. The Turkish import duty on cars is assessed on weight and not 'ad valorem'. So, to the yard of the railway station to weigh the cars. The scales, however, though wide enough, were not nearly long enough to take the cars. Not to be outdone, the officials proceeded to weigh the cars, one half at a time, first with the front wheels on the scale, and then the back. Consequently, the cars were scaled at more than half as much again as they should have been. Our protests to this effect fell on deaf ears, and we were told that we must deposit an amount of £T.4000. We had with us little more than a quarter of this, but offered to deposit it all and take an official with us to draw the balance from the bank in the next big town. But nothing save hard cash to the stated figure would satisfy them, and there was nothing for us to do but to return to Alexandretta to obtain more Turkish money.

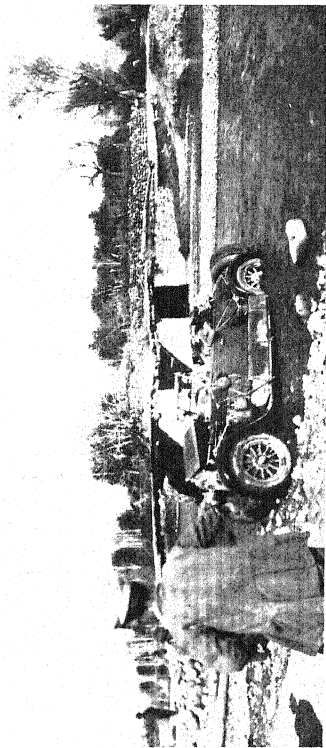
Two days later we made our second attempt to cross the frontier, having obtained the necessary funds—and then only from Aleppo—through Mr. Catoni's instrumentality. This time the medicine chest seemed likely to prove our downfall. In spite of a two hours' examination of our baggage on the previous occasion, the officials again made a meticulous investigation of every mortal

¹ At this time, £1 sterling equalled approximately £10 Turkish.

thing. I must admit, *en passant*, that, if over-zealous in the execution of their duty, these officials were persistently courteous. The medicine chest had to be opened, and every bottle and packet was examined. Then the query, 'How am I to know that these are medicines?' When I suggested that the proof of the pudding was in the eating, if he mistrusted labels, it was decided that the contents must be submitted for examination to a Medical Officer—and the nearest was twenty miles away! But on this they relented, and the chest was passed.

Then came further trouble over bottles of what in military parlance we call 'medical comforts', our reserves for use on occasions when, as recently on the Latakia-Aleppo road, we were marooned in snow-covered mountains, or cold and drenched from struggles through knee-deep mud. On the brandy and whisky we expected to pay duty, but a bottle of ginger wine was a serious stumbling-block. No such beverage was scheduled under Turkish Revenue laws. A subordinate suggested that, if it was not scheduled as dutiable, it must be duty free; but his chief pronounced for confiscation. I suggested his sampling it. But the chief apparently had misgivings, under subordinate eyes, in taking, during Ramadan, what might be alcohol. With less scruple for his staff, however, he made one of them drink a glassful. Ginger wine has something of a kick, if swallowed quickly; and it looked as though the grimaces of the subordinate would tell against us. By this time I was beginning to lose patience, and as a last resort suggested testing some of the contents of the bottle with a lighted match. The flame had no effect, and what remained of the bottle was returned to us as innocuous.

Our Customs examination had taken more than three hours. They even let air out of the spare tyres in case they carried something heavier! We had yet another ordeal to face. Two miles beyond Deurtyol and our Customs woes, we had to ford the Deli Chai, a deep, swift mountain stream, spanned only by a foot-bridge. The stream was considerably swollen by the melting of the snows up in the mountains, and, in trying to ford it, the leading car



In the Deli Chai—our only serious accident.

went in at a point where the water was too deep. Alas! it was travelling too fast, with the idea of 'rushing' the deep part. The result was that it set up an enormous wave which came right over the bonnet, flooding everything, including the carburetter. The engine stopped dead, with the car in mid-stream. After some reconnaissance the other car went through slowly at a point where the stream was wider, but shallower, and then towed the two-seater out. We next discovered that the icy cold water sucked into the engine through the carburetter had cracked some of the pistons.

The only possible solution was to tow the damaged car back through the stream and into Deurtyol, where we took the engine down and attempted to effect repairs. Examination showed that four of the pistons were cracked, whereas we had only two spare ones with us! By this time, it was late afternoon, and there was nothing for it but to turn back to Alexandretta once again. The Customs officials kindly—perhaps out of sheer pity—'sealed' the cars and medicine chest against our next coming. Then, having telegraphed to Mr. Catoni, we took our weary way to the frontier, the four-seater towing the damaged car. The steep gradient near 'Jonah's Pillar' made towing no easy matter, and we welcomed the lights of Mr. Catoni's rescue-cars and the relief of transferring to them the heavy weight of baggage from the derelict.

The next morning telegrams were sent off to Aleppo, Beirūt, Alexandria and Constantinople in our endeavour to locate a fresh set of 1925 pistons. After a week's delay, we got a set from Beirūt, and by the next day these were fitted. Having thoroughly tested the repaired engine, we eventually set out on the 14th of March on our third attempt to penetrate Turkey—nine days after the first. This time the Customs formalities were completed more or less rapidly, and the stream that had proved our downfall was negotiated without further mishap. This time there was no turning back to Syria and our friends.

CHAPTER XXI

ACROSS ANATOLIA

Itinerary: Djihan, Adana, Gulek Boghaz (Cilician Gates), Bozanti, Ulu Kishlar, Eregli, Karaman, Konia, Ak-Shehr, Afun Qarahisar, Kutahia, Eski-Shehr, Brusa, Mudania.

Plain and Rain in Cilicia

THE close of the preceding chapter saw us finally and triumphantly across the Syro-Turkish frontier at the proverbial third attempt. We were now travelling under the official escort of a Turkish gendarme provided by the Government of Angora as a safeguard both for ourselves and for the Turkish Government. This arrangement was maintained throughout our journey across Anatolia, and our escort was changed at Adana, Konia and Eski-Shehr, as we passed from the jurisdiction of one Vali to another's. In addition, of course, we had Ghaleb Mukhtar as interpreter, and from point to point took on the services of some kind of local guide, without whom finding the route would have been a difficult business, as it proved at times even with such guidance. Our personnel, therefore, was well up to what we might consider normal strength.

But, though we were across the frontier and were not to appear yet again on the Catonis' door-step in Alexandretta, still we were not destined to survive many miles without new trouble. Safely through our difficulties of the Customs and the Deli Chai, we were to find ourselves after a bare seventy miles baulked once again by mud. The delay in returning for money, and still more for the pistons, was to prove our undoing. The fine spell of those ten days had broken on the eve of our last departure from Alex-

andretta, with the result that we found the Cilician Plain almost an impassable quagmire, and the question of our progress something quite beyond the services of escort, interpreter or guide.

At first progress was not too bad, although the rain was ominous of trouble. From Deurtyol we had taken as our first 'guide' a Ford car to show us the best track to Toprak Kale, a station where our road struck the Baghdad Bahn (railway). North of Deurtyol we were out amid black Beduin tents on the Plain of Issus, with its famous ruins, reminiscent of Alexander the Great. We had, in fact, retraced over long sections, and touched at various points, his famous eastward march by Issus and Babylon, Bisitun and Ecbatana, through Khyber to that final and famous engagement with King Porus not many miles from the Attock bridge, by which we had crossed the Indus four months before.

Westward from Toprak Kale we were running close to, or in sight of, the railway, for the first ten miles on hard, dry ground. Shortly afterwards the track showed signs of very recent rain, and the surface became softer and softer until by the time we reached Djihan (Hamidia), some thirty miles east of Adana, we found it impossible to continue. The rich black cotton soil of the Cilician Plain makes easy going, if it is dry; but in wet weather the great stretch of plain away to Tarsus becomes impassable. It is, in such conditions, far too fertile for motorists! It was quite impossible to get any traction on our wheels, and even pushing was none too easy. The road ahead was reported to be worse, and as it was growing dark, we decided to remain where we were for the night, although the only 'hotel' was of primitive squalor, with food provided in a neighbouring eating-house. In this latter, large bowls of different sorts of hot and cold food were displayed. After a preliminary examination and tasting we decided what we wanted, and later our meal was brought to the hotel on a tray.

We awoke to the sound of pouring rain; it had apparently been pouring all night. Progress that day by road,

with our heavy load, was out of the question; and next day, with rain still falling, we had to take to the railway for thirty miles, having decided that, in our enforced delay, we should prefer to exchange the discomfort of Djihan for some degree of comfort in Adana. In the latter, as capital of the Vilayet, we hoped also to enlist the aid of the Turkish authorities and establish contact with the British Consul at Mersina.

Even this short railway trip was not without incident, as, at a small station beyond Missis, we were told that a tin box and two bedding-rolls had fallen off the four-seater car some miles back. The loss of the box was serious, as it contained amongst other things the triptyques for the European section of the journey. The train would not wait, so we sent Ghaleb to go back to their rescue. He found that the trunk had been broken open, but succeeded in recovering everything, including its rifled contents, from the Beduins who had taken possession of them almost as soon as they fell from the train. The next morning he appeared in Adana, with our lost luggage intact, having brought it the fifteen miles from Missis by camel.

We were not to leave Adana—by car at least—until the 2nd of April, having come within thirty miles of it on the 14th of March! But the weeks of waiting were not without interest.

Adana itself has long been a place of note, commanding, as it does, the pass through the Taurus mountains. It was, in fact, built by the great Haroun Al Raschid on the ruins of 'Antiochia ad Sarum', the ancient city of Syrian kings, in a territory that Pompey settled with pirates.

Our main impression was of the great improvement in the place since we had seen it three years before. Then it was still suffering from the after-effects of the Great War; now it reflected the general amelioration in the conditions of Turkish life and national development. Instead of bombarded ruins we found new buildings and paved streets kept clean by the municipal scavengers. In addition to the bazaars, really good shops had been established, at which

one could obtain almost anything, including the most modern agricultural machinery for the cultivation of the rich plain in which it lies. In this connexion, through the kindness of Mr. Skinner, the engineer, we were able to see over the Gilodo Cotton Mills, which were typical of the modernising of Turkish industry. Everything in the factory is used up, apparently; the refuse of the crushed cotton seeds is burnt in the furnaces, which in their turn work the machinery for crushing the oil out of the good cotton seeds.

Our hotel itself was new. It was, for Anatolia, very good; at least it boasted a very welcome bath, although the bathroom also served as bedroom for the old hotel-servant, an aged Armenian woman, with a shrivelled arm, who had suffered much in the massacres of earlier days. The restaurant was open to the general public, but we could at least order food without having to make a pilgrimage, as at Djihan, and sample the dishes of our choice.

One of my first visits, as in any of these Turkish towns, was to the Vali and Chief of Police, of whom we were to have further need before we left. Later, we went by train to Mersina to consult with Mr. Chafy, the British Consul, about our future plans. In view of fairly persistent rain it was decided that the cars should be left in Adana and that we should entrain for Constantinople, in order that we might utilise these valuable days in making preliminary arrangements for the journey across Europe. Mr. Chafy kindly agreed to telegraph us from Mersina as soon as there had been several days of dry weather in which the tracks would have had time to dry.

Somewhat unfortunately we arrived in Constantinople during the lesser Bairam, which follows the close of Ramadan, and found offices as available as Whitehall on Easter Monday. The streets, too, for the same reason were rather too crowded for comfort. Turkish officials were, however, extremely helpful as soon as available, and we were well occupied for several days in a variety of interviews incidental to travel: with the Bulgarian Minister about our passports; with the Banque Ottomane on questions of

finance; with Nadir Bey and the Touring Club of Constantinople on more technical matters; and with our Consul-General on Income Tax forms, which seem relentless in pursuit! By way of relief, visits to the bazaars and Haji Bekir, the famous sweet-shop.

After five days we received the expected telegram and took the first train back to Adana. It was scarcely encouraging to awake after our first night in the train to a heavy downpour which lasted the greater part of the next day. Our attention was divided between anxious examination of the road over the Taurus mountains from Ulu Kishlar to Bozanti, and admiration of the engineering feat that enabled the railway to pass along a shelf of rock overlooking the gorge hundreds of feet below. At Yenidje we were surprised and delighted to find not only that there was no rain, but that the roads were quite dry. The Cilician Plain had escaped, and we had hopes of crossing it at last, even if the Konia Plain defeated us.

On Palm Sunday, the 1st of April—a suitable date!—we drove back to Djihan, to take up our journey by road from the point where it had been interrupted; and then returned to Adana. Those thirty miles were thoroughly typical of road conditions in Anatolia. For instance, we crossed the old Roman bridge at Missis; then what had been a metalled road, but now in such disrepair that one was obliged to make a track at the side; then, ten miles further, an isolated mile of good macadamised road across the plain—and so via another Roman bridge over the Seihan river into Adana.

We were to leave Adana the next morning, but there was still excitement in store for us. We had already obtained our police escort for the journey to Konia; but, on going to make our farewells to the Vali, we were informed that Ghaleb Mukhtar could not come with us. The Turkish Police maintained that he was, in spite of protestations to the contrary, an Armenian refugee, and had, in fact, been arrested in Adana only a year previously when on a similar journey. Ghaleb's behaviour at this point was typical of an Armenian, and most unwise, to say the least of

it. Finding that his own plaintive story was of no avail, he started to curse and to swear at the Turkish police. Obviously this only made matters worse, and I had the greatest difficulty in making him adopt a more tactful attitude. He was instructed to report to the Chief of Police at the Government Offices. This he not unnaturally interpreted to mean that, in spite of the police officer's assurances, he would be locked up in durance vile, and probably suffer the fate of many of his compatriots in recent years. The police officer, a Cypriot, speaking very good English, assured me, in confidence, that such would not be the case. He would be seen across the frontier to Aleppo, in accordance with present-day regulations in Turkey, which prohibit Turkish or Armenian subjects who fled from the country during the Nationalist Movement from ever again returning. In order to allay the fears of Ghaleb, and my wife's doubts, our Consul, Mr. Chafy, arranged with the French Consul in Adana to see that the promise was kept. This put Ghaleb in a strong position, as, being in possession of a Syrian passport, he was entitled to claim French protection. A few days later we received notification from Aleppo that our foolhardy guide had returned safely. In Ghaleb Mukhtar's place, the Chief of Police at Adana secured us the services of a new guide, also a Cypriot, Ali, who will reappear anon.

At long last we were ready to leave Adana, but I feel that it is impossible to end this account of it without a reference to Chinassi Bey and his charming wife, who did so much to make our stay there agreeable. Chinassi Bey himself was a descendant of Spanish Jews of Salonica; his beautiful young wife was a Circassian by birth and justly proud of her interesting ancestry, which included the famous Shah Mil. It was a surprise to come, in those parts, upon a house such as theirs. It was a charming modern villa; the comfortable library contained not only all the latest illustrated papers, English, French and American, but interesting books in many languages, notably those on the Caucasus. Madame Chinassi Bey had even spent some time, while in England, studying the history of her race

at the British Museum. Although this may sound as if she was something of a blue-stocking, she was, in fact, a thorough tomboy—expert with all kinds of fire-arms, a wonderful horsewoman and a formidable opponent on the tennis court; and always appropriately and exquisitely dressed.

Through the Cilician Gates

It gives some idea of our most recent delays that we were leaving Adana on the 2nd of April, a bare hundred miles from Alexandretta, whence we had first set out on the 5th of March. The whole journey to Constantinople, about eight hundred miles, should have occupied a week. Actually, with fine weather prevailing at last, we reached Constantinople in six days.

Just outside Tarsus our road turned north, without actually entering the town. 'No mean city' in the day of St. Paul, it is still a city of south-eastern Anatolia. Of Assyrian origin, it rose to greatness under the Seleucidae, and was at its height as capital of Roman Cilicia in days when Strabo counted it above Athens and Alexandria, and Cleopatra sailed the waters of its Cydnus in the guise of Aphrodite. But in every age, as to-day, it owed its importance to its controlling position on two main routes of traffic, the eastern to Antioch through the Syrian Gates by which we had come, and the northern through the Cilician Gates which we were now to follow.

A few miles out of Tarsus we were already on the Taurus foothills; another twenty miles and, at Kharmalak Han, we were climbing by a wild and mountainous road, through pine and juniper. From Sheikh Seidi Han, two thousand four hundred feet high, the road, descending slightly, runs along the face of the cliff above the Gulak Su, until the valley speedily narrows to the southern end of the wonderful natural gorge known as the Cilician Gates. A mile beyond, the road crosses to the right bank of the river, and four miles further we reached the actual 'Gates'—Gulek Boghaz, as the Turk calls them—where the road is cut into the rock of the gorge, to emerge a little



A rough road through the Taurus.

later into the wider valley that forms the northern approach to the 'Gates'. As our road wound downhill, we had a glorious view of snow mountains up the valley, with rocky peaks above the cliff-side, and, in that wild and imposing setting, the ruins of Ibrahim Pasha Kale, recalling days of a century since, when the Sultan lost Syria to his energetic viceroy in Egypt, and seemed like to lose Asia Minor as well, as a result of Ibrahim Pasha's vigorous and successful campaigns.

There was little time for historical retrospect, as a few miles further we found ourselves on what was perhaps the most dangerous piece of road that we had to negotiate throughout the whole of our journey. A landslide had almost swept away the track along the edge of a dangerous precipice, and we were obliged to crawl breathlessly along, with the near-side wheels forced up on to the slope of the mountain, and the cars consequently tilted to an alarmingly dangerous and almost unbelievable angle. In actual rain or snow it would have been a sheer impossibility to proceed.

This dangerous stretch successfully overcome, we came down to the railway and halted for the night at Bozanti. There was no *han* for shelter, but, thanks to instructions telegraphed ahead by the Vali of Adana, the officer commanding the little garrison placed his office at our disposal. Food was supplied from a cook-shop, and we passed a not uncomfortable night with our valises on the floor. Ali proved thoroughly useful in the capacity of general servant as well as interpreter. In appearance he looked a complete scallywag—collarless, sockless, unwashed and with a most disreputable cap pulled well down over his eyes. He was a factory-hand in Adana, and started out with us in nothing but his dungarees, Lovell supplying a dirty old raincoat, which at least protected him against the cold in the Taurus, if it did little to improve his general appearance.

The following day we completed the crossing of the Taurus. In the main, the road for the thirty miles to Ulu Kishlar was metalled, but it was often very rough and dangerously narrow, although we encountered nothing as

disturbing as our experience of the previous day. Once again our way was partially blocked by a landslide, but here we had no difficulty after removing some rocks! Again and again we found that the road edge had fallen away or—more treacherously—was falling away under the effect of several winters' rains. The Turks, since the completion of the Taurus railway tunnels, had not thought fit to keep the roadway in repair. At another point we had to negotiate a dangerously narrow camel-back bridge, and finally an irritating series of irrigation-ditches over the last two miles of mud, which brought us to Ulu Kishlar and, actually, the highest point of the road between Tarsus and Konia.

Ulu Kishlar marked, too, the end of prepared roadway, such as it was. From there the track wound downhill across the barren, almost desert country of the northern slope of Taurus, with little or no traffic and consequently little more than vague cart-ruts, that were ill to find on this arid, coffee-coloured mountain-side. There is only a drop of some thousand feet on these northern slopes, then one is out on the great Plain of Konia, almost as barren and poor of track as the mountain-slopes themselves. True, the Plain has intermittent patches of green, with trees even in the neighbourhood of towns, and occasional small hills; but on the whole the impression one gets is more of a desert than a fertile plain. In wet weather it is impossible for cars east of Karaman. It is almost impossible at any time, without local guides to keep one from going astray into its salt-pans and bogs; and even guides could not always keep the track.

We picked up a boy at Ulu Kishlar to guide us to Eregli, arranging to send him back by train. In spite of this precaution, we were already bogged long before we reached Eregli. After trying in vain to bring the cars out under their own power, we found a Turkish peasant ploughing near by. We sent the guide to ask for the loan of his horses, and with the help of these we were soon out. It is only typical of the change that has come over Turkey that he definitely refused to accept any reward for his services. The

old days of unlimited *baksheesh* would appear to be over; the peasant of the Anatolian country-side has, in our experience at least, found a new pride and a new self-respect. The children are learning it, too. On another occasion, Williams gave a small child a coin, whereat an elder sister, some ten years old, gently but firmly insisted on returning it, with the suggestion implicit that Young Turkey of to-day does not countenance that sort of thing.

Eregli, with its walled *serai*, gardens and eating-house, was a pleasant break in the monotony of the landscape. But away from it we were once more out on the vast boggy plain, crossing now the Divle Su by a quaint bridge with a bend in its middle; later, one of many irrigation-streams where we found it advisable to send a bullock-cart through first on reconnaissance; or again, just before Sidrova, the Abrala Chai with its good three-arched bridge. Here the track was on a raised causeway, as on either side the country was flooded.

That night, at Karaman, we succeeded in finding a *han*, although it was somewhat doubtful in appearance. We dined well at a cook-house, reaping the advantage of travelling under police escort, as it was our gendarme who ordered the place to be kept open for our benefit after closing hours.

With a new guide, we had what was, by comparison, a good run over the seventy miles to Konia, although twenty miles out we were again badly stuck in soft ploughland, in which he landed us through taking the wrong track. Still, beyond the six-arched bridge that spans the Charshembe Su, we struck a really good stretch of twelve miles; but even it came suddenly to an end and we bumped our way into Konia over distressing *pavé*.

Konia was abundantly typical of the kindness with which we met at the hands of officials throughout our Anatolian journey. The Vali entertained us with charming courtesy. He had been Governor in the Yemen and later of Baghdad, and gave us much interesting information about his travels in those countries. He was perhaps more

interesting still as an embodiment of the spirit of modern Turkey. Turkey of to-day is the home of hard-working, self-respecting Turkish peasant folk; the curse of the parasite middleman, Greek or Armenian, has gone.

The Vali put his car at our disposal, and we were taken to see Konia's great museum, with the Director, a most charming and cultured Turk, as cicerone. It is in a mosque attached to an old tomb—a storehouse of perfect carpets, old illuminated *Korans*, and wonders of embroidery, inlaid metal and carved wood. Konia boasts a wealth of monuments apart from the treasures of this museum, as it has been for centuries the main emporium for the hinterland, lying on the great line of communication from western Ephesus to eastern Euphrates by way of Tarsus and Antioch. It heard the march of Xenophon's ten thousand; later, the mellifluous periods of Cicero, when it had become a Roman province; later still, the preaching of St. Paul, when he had shaken from his feet the dust of unreceptive Pisidian Antioch. But its architecture is reminiscent of its later Saracen history. Its walls, now vanished, were built from the ruins of Seljuk buildings, which had made ancient Iconium a mediaeval wonder, justifying the Turkish proverb, 'See all the world, but see Konia'. In spite of decay, its position left it not unimportant; and it was Ibrahim Pasha's crowning victory here that gave Mehemet Ali the master hand in the peace negotiations of 1833. In our own days it has returned to much of its earlier importance, as lying on the great railway that so nearly connects Constantinople with the Persian Gulf.

Farewell to Asia

With a new escort we left Konia on a day's run that was to take us off the Plain to hilly and greener country. There was a road, but, at first, roughness obliged us to leave it and run on tracks at the side. Later the surface improved.

Sixty miles out we came to the *hammam* at Ilghin, the ancient Tyriacum, which our guide was anxious we should

visit; but we decided against taking a hot bath in the famous cave! Two hours later we were having our lunch in a tiny cook-shop at Ak-Shehr, a very picturesque market-town — heir to the ancient Philomelium — its houses rising in successive terraces on the lower foothills of the Sultan Dagħ, their sloping tiled roofs reminding us that we were leaving the East behind. Thence our road lay often across wide stony river-beds or the narrower but deeper channels of torrents from the mountains, involving us in frequent detours to avoid bad culverts, broken bridges or the snare of a collapsing bridge, when it seemed wiser to ford the river. It was at one of these fords that I was anxious to get a photograph of the cars in mid-stream. To do so, I borrowed a donkey from a peasant and so reached my point of vantage on the further shore dry-shod, although at moments I had fears that the donkey would collapse under my weight and give me an icy ducking. The peasant had to wade across to recover his donkey, but he, too, resolutely refused to take any payment for his kindly service.

Afiun Qarahisar, with its broken-down guns and lorries, still gave evidence of the warlike activities in which it had been engaged six years previously. In fact, our whole route from Ak-Shehr to Eski-Shehr, during that day's run and the next, lay—and obviously lay—in the area of the Greco-Turkish war of 1921 and 1922. Afiun, as a junction for Smyrna, was a point of strategic importance.

Its name signifies 'Opium Black Castle'—it is a centre of opium-growing—but, far from getting any such solace from it, we could not get even the comfort of a breakfast, as the 'hotel' provided none and the cook-shops were not yet open when we left at half-past seven. Instead, we made the seventy miles to Kutahia, and only at eleven o'clock were able to enjoy the meal that is sometimes known as 'brunch'. By then we were hungry, as, to reach Kutahia, we had had to climb more than four thousand feet, over rolling downs much like Salisbury Plain. Finally we came down to the quaint old town by the valley of the Pursak

Chai, crossing the latter by the three temporary bridges replacing the permanent one that was destroyed in the afore-mentioned war.

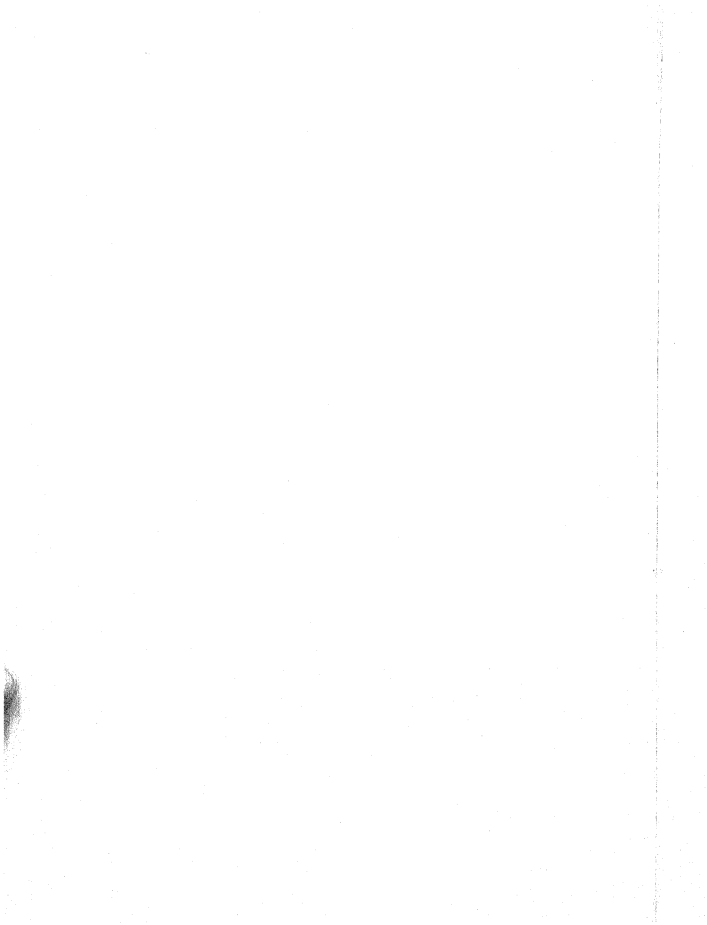
Beyond Kutahia, we left the direct road to Brusa on a detour through Eski-Shehr, where we had to obtain our new escort from the Vali. Our guide, however, took us too far along the course of the river, which we should have crossed much earlier, and so we missed the proper track. The result was that he brought us on to what was little better than a farm-waggon track across plough-land, in which both cars were bogged. In time, however, we came again to the valley of the Pursak Chai, the railway, and the main road into Eski-Shehr—a big railway junction for the lines to Adana, Angora and Constantinople, although the road into it would never have suggested its importance. More than a junction, it is the site of the main railway workshops, and at the same time the centre of Turkish military aviation.

Most of the notables I met at a breakfast-banquet given by the Vali at seven o'clock the next morning. Apparently the whole of our party had been expected, but, as this was not clear from the invitation, I had gone alone, except that I took Ali as interpreter. While the rest of our party breakfasted at the hotel, our disreputable, collarless *dragoman* feasted with the Vali, Judge and other notables, to his great pride and content. The banquet was given in the Eski-Shehr Club, and it was true Turkish fare of ices, sweet biscuits, cakes and wines, to which I think Ali did better justice than I. During the banquet the attendants apparently deemed it tactful to address our henchman by the title of 'Bey'—a compliment which Ali received unmoved. For the rest of the journey to Constantinople our Adana factory-hand was laughingly accorded the soubriquet of 'Ali Bey'.

As soon as the function was over, we set out on our journey to Brusa, a hundred miles of beautiful hilly country. After thirty miles of very bad going to Boz Euyuk, between steep-sided mountains, we ran along the valley of the Kara Su, where we found—to my wife's



A village mosque in Anatolia.



intense delight—the first primrose that we had seen, since an English spring of four years before. Gradually, the valley narrowed to a gorge, with the road winding along a shelf of rock. At times only one-way traffic was possible, and we had to wait at wider spots for bullock-carts to pass us. In a little while our road left the valley and climbed for some four miles from the village of Bazarjik, until at last, at the top of the rise, we got a wonderful view of snow-clad Mount Olympus, with its wooded slopes below. Down again, along another valley, and we were on the foothills of Olympus, commanding a fine view of Brusa's fertile valley, along which we ran for some eight miles in a veritable oasis of orchards and big trees.

Brusa itself, with its many mosques, stands out above the valley on the wooded slopes. Our hotel was set in a garden of flowers, and must have made as pleasant a prison as could be for the Christian officer prisoners who were confined there during the Great War. The names of many of them were registered in the visitors' book, which made interesting reading. But Brusa's interest is of far older time than that of the Great War; for, strangely, it was the earliest home of those other Christian prisoners who made the name of 'Janizary' famous throughout the world. Its palaces and mosques are relics of days when, after a ten years' siege, it became the Ottoman capital before Orkhan had yet got 'the hog-sty and pottle of wine' of which the Greeks made light so foolishly. For centuries before that it had been the home of Bithynian kings, of Roman and Byzantine emperors, since the days when it was founded, if the story be true, at the suggestion of the great Hannibal. To-day its glory may have gone, but its beauty still remains.

We left it on Easter morning, still lovely in spite of grey skies which shrouded Olympus in clouds. It had rained overnight, but we could now afford to greet rain with equanimity. We were on a first-class road, and it was not long before we had topped the hills that lie between Brusa and Mudania, and were looking down on the Sea of Marmora. After an hour's run we were breakfasting

at Mudania. Some three hours later—despite the efforts of recalcitrant buffaloes who were not, apparently, anxious to come aboard—we were looking back from our ferry-boat on the shores of Asia receding in the distance.

CHAPTER XXII

A EUROPEAN EPILOGUE

Itinerary: Constantinople, Adrianople, Svilengrad, Philippopolis, Sofia, Plevna, Ruschuk, Giurgiu, Bucharest, Fogaras, Alba Iulia, Cluj, Oradea, Budapest, Graz, Villach, Tarvisio, Udine, Trieste, Venice, Parma, Sestri Levante, Rapallo, Genoa, Bordighera, Antibes, Avignon, Thiers, Paris, Amiens, Calais, Dover, CHELSEA.

As the Turkish Government does not allow foreigners to cross the fortified zones east and west of the Bosphorus by road, one is obliged, in approaching Constantinople from the east, either to proceed to Mudania, as we did, and take the ferry-boat across the Sea of Marmora, or to go by way of Ismid and entrain there for Haidar Pasha. In view of the want of entraining facilities at Ismid, the route by ferry is to be preferred, more especially as after detraining one's car at Haidar Pasha it is still necessary to embark on a ferry-boat to reach Europe. It must be admitted that motor accommodation on the ferry-boat is somewhat limited. It is advisable to telegraph ahead from Brusa to the *chef de gare* at Mudania, so that the deck may be cleared and a space reserved for a car. When we crossed, the water was fortunately smooth, and the cars survived their four and a half hours' sea passage without damage.

On arrival in Constantinople, unloading was rather a tedious business; but we were met by Nadir Bey and several of his staff, who showed us every possible kindness in helping us through the usual difficulties attendant on harbour and Customs formalities. Finally, after causing considerable excitement in the streets of Constantinople, we were at last able to hide our unkempt-looking persons in the luxurious comfort of the Pera Palace Hotel.

While we should have liked to see more of Constantinople, which is at its loveliest in spring, we were very much occupied in bringing our records up-to-date and in arranging for our onward journey. This had been subject to change, as, on our visit to Constantinople ten days before, we had been advised that the roads on the direct route between Sofia, Belgrade and Zagreb were in bad condition—worse, in fact, than anything in Asia. Having already lost nine weeks since our arrival in Beirūt through rains, and having had a surfeit of bad roads for the time being, we decided against the most direct route through Jugo-Slavia to Zagreb in favour of that from Sofia by way of Ruschuk, Bucharest and Budapest. This involved telegraphing to the Automobile Association in London for new triptyques to cover Rumania, Hungary and—to be on the safe side—Austria. The last precaution in the event proved wise, as, on receiving our Bulgarian triptyques through the kindness of the British Minister at Sofia, we were strongly advised to avoid Jugo-Slavia altogether and make Trieste by way of Austria.

There was much, therefore, to arrange in the matter of finance, although our provision did not eventually save us from all trouble on that score, as the sequel will show. In Persia we had had to pay a heavy deposit, although, by enlisting the help of our own officials in Tehrān, we succeeded in recovering it before leaving the country. Again, there was the demand for a large deposit on entering Turkey which I have already elaborated. The Touring Club of Constantinople, an embryo Automobile Association, who showed great interest in our adventure and the utmost kindness to me personally, is doing its best to have such Customs difficulties removed for the benefit of foreign travellers crossing Turkey by car in the future. It is hoped shortly to introduce there also the facilities of the international triptyques. Our anxieties, therefore, for papers to cover the many countries that we were to cross in a comparatively short time will be abundantly intelligible. We had no desire to leave sundry hundreds of pounds in each of these countries, recoverable only after

we left the country. Although we eventually had triptyques to avoid any further car deposits, there was still the ordinary financial provision to be made for a journey through half a dozen countries of different currencies!

At the same time we had to obtain the necessary papers for our new interpreter, an alleged Bulgar, who seemed, however, to be of Jewish extraction. With his well-tailored appearance he was a marked contrast to our lamented, if disreputable, Ali 'Bey'. What we mainly required of him was that he should speak Bulgarian; actually, he spoke French, Turkish, Bulgarian and Rumanian. We were, therefore, linguistically well equipped.

Still we contrived to spare some time from days of overwhelming correspondence for something of lighter entertainment, and, amongst other things, assisted at rehearsals for some amateur theatricals at our own Embassy. It seemed at least to bring us a little nearer the London of our journey's end. On another occasion at 'The Turquoise', there was a fête in aid of the 'Sinistres de Smyrne', the victims of the recent earthquake. That was to have a repercussion, so to speak, on our own journey at no distant date.

One of our last duties—and a pleasant one—before leaving Constantinople was to send to the Turkish Government our thanks, and to the Valis of Adana, Konia and Eski-Shehr our very sincere gratitude for all they did to make our journeying in Turkey as pleasant and easy as physical conditions would allow. The Government was responsible for the system of escort under which we travelled, and which proved of great service. Every rank and grade of Turkish official and officer showed us charming courtesy and gave us valuable help. Before entering Turkey we were fully convinced that, although we might achieve Constantinople, we should not do so without a considerable amount of difficulty and obstruction from possibly hostile Turks. Our initial troubles at the frontier seemed to confirm our fears. Even there we met with courtesy throughout; and our actual experience on our journey was the reverse of our expectations. Wherever we

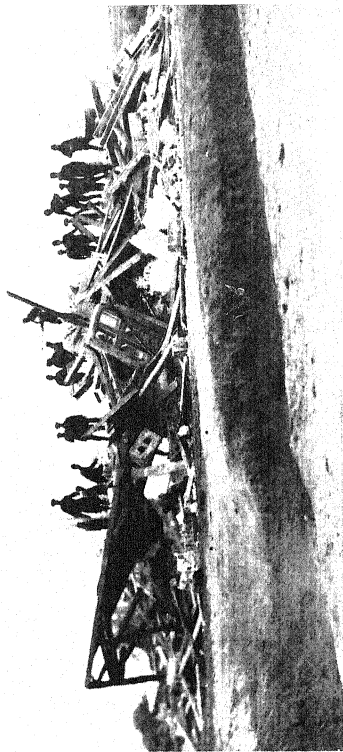
went, we were accorded a hearty and sympathetic welcome. The people, whether high officials or humble peasants, went out of their way to lessen the difficulties of our journey; and, instead of leaving Turkey with feelings of relief, we crossed into Bulgaria with memories of one of the most delightful months that we had ever enjoyed abroad. I feel that it is not only a pleasure but a duty to put this experience on record, as other travellers have written and spoken very differently of Turkey, even in recent times.

We were not, however, to reach the frontier without further excitement. We imagined that by now we had run the gamut of every possible element and climatic condition—intense heat, biting cold, floods, gales, mud, sand and snowstorms. But Europe provided what was, perhaps, the most alarming of all—earthquake: we had our first taste of this in Adrianople.

We had recovered the cars from the kindly care of Nadir Bey, and entrained for Chorlu, to cross the prohibited area. There we took to the road again, reaching Adrianople late in the evening. We were just in the act of manœuvring the cars into the hotel garden—and so fortunately away from the building—when we felt the first shock of earthquake. Again, we were awakened by another shock in the middle of the night. It was not a pleasant sensation; one felt so completely helpless.

We spent the next morning in recovering the deposit which caused so much trouble at Deurtyol; and in the afternoon, everything *seeming* quiet, we 'carried on' up the Maritza valley to the frontier post of Kapu Kule. Turkish kindness accompanied us right to the frontier; for we were escorted there by one of our newly made friends, Sherif Haidar Ali. A son of the Sherif of Mecca who had been expelled by 'King' Hussein, this Arab prince, Turkish bred, was now representative in Constantinople of an American motor organisation. He spoke excellent English and had given us invaluable assistance throughout our stay.

With a final salaam to Turkey and to him we crossed



Papazly's three-storied school after the earthquake, April 1928.

into Bulgaria at the frontier post of Varanteki, and so came to Svilengrad. By this time we knew that the earthquake had been serious. The Orient Express, due at Adrianople from Paris in the morning, had not arrived, and telegraphic communication was cut. At Svilengrad there was still no Express, but a great crowd. Our baggage was checked through the Customs without examination—there was obviously something wrong!—and, on inquiring for rooms, we were told that we could have the whole ‘hotel’, as everyone was sleeping outside—in a cow-shed—after the experience of the previous night. The terrified inhabitants of Svilengrad had deserted the town *en masse* and encamped in the fields. When, later, I was awakened by another shock, I wished we had followed their example.

It was not until next day, however, that we reached the centre of the disturbance. Coming suddenly on tumbled-down, chimneyless houses we found that we had entered the earthquake area. Papazly, seventy miles from Svilengrad, had been flattened out as if it had been built of cards. We found some poor villagers still hunting in the ruins for their former homes and friends. Further on we found that sixty-five per cent of Philippopolis had been destroyed. Two kilometres of the main railway line had gone, and the embankment sunk; it was little wonder, therefore, that there had been no Orient Express. The road, too, was badly broken, and certain bridges badly damaged. Everyone was in the streets, with their stores, pots, pans, rugs and I know not what—those, at least, who had taken the warning sent out from the Observatory at Budapest. Others had scoffed—and perished.

The worst tremor had lasted but a few moments, but in those few moments hundreds had been killed or badly injured, thousands ruined and made homeless, and damage had been done to a worth of several million pounds. Yet, as we travelled through the stricken area, we found the sturdy Bulgarian people accepting their misfortune in a wonderfully philosophic spirit, rescuing what they could of their belongings, and setting up temporary shelters of rugs and blankets in the fields and open spaces. At first

the weather was warm and springlike, but later there came days of uninterrupted rain, and the plight of those thousands of homeless refugees must have been truly miserable.

The King himself came at once to the scene of the disaster. Everything was done that could be to relieve distress. Troops were on guard; order was preserved. But it was a sad and impressive memory that we took away with us from Philippopolis—the glimpse of a pathetic service. An old Greek priest was blessing his unhappy people, who, kneeling round him in an open square outside the town, were praying for deliverance from further disaster.

Though the shock was felt in Sofia, the centre of disturbance moved south-west to Salonica and Corinth, and we came to the capital through beautiful hilly country and up a valley with its fruit trees all in blossom—a strange contrast to the desolation that we had left behind us. We were selfishly relieved to find ourselves in the safe comfort of a thoroughly Western hotel after our quarters and experiences of the two previous nights.

Next day we were crossing the Balkans by the Araba-Konak Pass, where there was a police-post and much talk of brigands, who were certainly conspicuous by their absence. After a meal in a tiny Bulgarian *estaminet*, filled with very jovial villagers—the brigands, perhaps—we reached Plevna at midnight. From there we followed what proved to be the mistaken advice of the Bulgarian Automobile Club to take the direct road, ignoring the advice of a local taxi-driver to go by a longer route. In consequence we encountered deep mud again, but, fortunately, for the last time on our journey. We were bogged for some time outside the village of Kozar Belina. The mistaken advice had caused us to leave the perfectly good macadamised road and take what was alleged to be a short cut. Alas! the road gradually dwindled into a mere cart-track across ploughed fields. Rain had fallen heavily the previous day, and it was only with the help of a number of peasants that we were able, after repeated pushing, to overcome the worst stretches. Later, by utilising non-skid chains, and

with the aid of a local guide, we struck the main road again and so made Ruschuk.

There, under the eyes of an excited crowd, we crossed the Danube to Giurgiu on its Rumanian bank, and drove through an ugly flat plain to Bucharest. Our experiences of Rumania were not all happy. We went to a big hotel, but they refused to give us rooms until a Constantinople acquaintance telephoned to his friend M. Henri Mano—a relative of the Prime Minister—who came down to the hotel and insisted on their giving us good accommodation. He and his wife—a daughter of M. Bratianu—were exceedingly kind and saved Rumania from the wholesale condemnation to which we were inclined to consign it by the time that we left the country.

After some days there we made a day's run to Fogaras and its mountains, and so across the Transylvanian Alps to Alba Iulia of ancient name—and more trouble. It all arose from a lunch. We ordered certain priced items and were persuaded to have some special dish. It must have been a very 'special' dish, as the bill came to nine pounds sterling. I gave that Rumanian the best of my German, till I surprised myself. But it was a Saturday, with no chance of supplementing the supply of Rumanian money which was calculated to see us across the frontier. Having paid, we had just enough to get tea at Cluj, and our accommodation for the night at Oradea, which we had to leave breakfastless, making our meal alfresco some miles out with the aid of a 'Primus' stove. The irony of it was that I had in my pocket Cook's cheques and a letter of credit for several hundred pounds, as useless on that Sunday morning as they were in Oradea on Saturday night. We closed that chapter of misfortune by missing the road to Budapest!

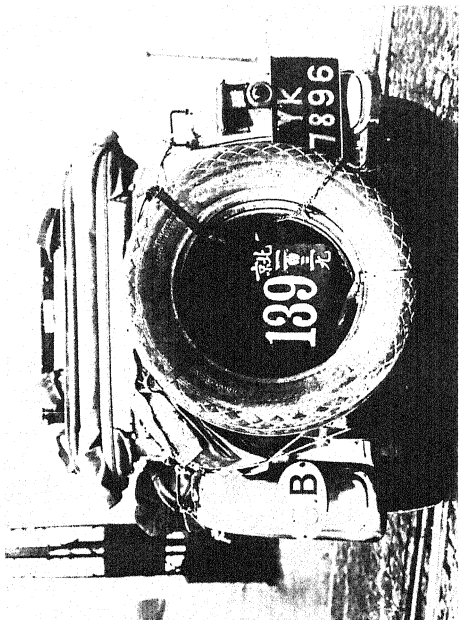
At Bucharest we had sent our interpreter back; and our personnel was again at its minimum. But in Budapest we were joined by Miss Margery Hume, a sister-in-law of my wife's, who accompanied us home. She was very welcome company for my wife—as indeed she was for us all—after so many months of male escort.

From Budapest, our route ran by the Lake of Balaton across the Austrian frontier to Graz. This, of course, was our detour to avoid Jugo-Slavia, and we came down into Italy at Tarvisio through Villach in Carinthia. Crossing the Carnic Alps by the glorious Predil Pass, we reached Trieste by the Udine Valley, the scene of such strenuous fighting in the War, but, as we saw it, a wonder of peaceful beauty. After crossing the Austrian frontier, we found that our passports were missing, but were fortunate enough to recover them on returning to the frontier post.

On the ferry from Mudania we had fallen in with a charming Frenchman and his daughter, who very kindly obtained for us detailed Michelin itineraries for our journey onwards from Trieste into France. One might almost leave the account to the brevity of the itinerary that heads the chapter; the ground is too well trodden to need description. But a few episodes of personal experience remain in the memory.

Leaving the cars at the causeway end at Mestre, we went by motor-boat to Venice, but were glad to escape as quickly as possible—it was so cold. Then, as we made our way across the broad valley of the Po to Parma, we ran up against Fascist regime. This demands that at certain level-crossings, where there are no barriers, one must stop the car and make sure that no train is coming. On this occasion, with the two-seater, I *almost* stopped, looking both ways before crossing. Suddenly, on the far side, two Fascist gendarmes appeared from nowhere and held us up. It transpired that, as I had not come to an absolute standstill before crossing the line, I was liable to a fine of 25 lire. The penalty was collected on the spot, so there was nothing for it but to look pleasant and pay up, especially as the two Fascisti carried out their duties in a smiling and almost apologetic manner. From Parma we crossed the Apennines to the Ligurian coast at Sestri Levante. Beyond Genoa the coast is losing much of its beauty through deforestation; but it is still beautiful, even in the rain that greeted us at Bordighera.

Next morning we crossed into France near Mentone



Leaving Dover Harbour for Chelsea—29th May 1928.

with little or no delay. Antibes, and its famous Cap Hotel, provided some days' amusement and much-needed rest. Going north from Avignon, we left the main road at Tain to visit our friends of the Mudania ferry in their home in the Puy-de-Dôme. Unfortunately, they had already gone to Paris, and we stayed instead in a wayside inn such as only France can produce. Back to the main road at Vichy, we were soon part of the endless queue that was trying to speed its way to Paris on that 'Ascension' evening.

In Paris, one of the cars was borrowed by General Motors and put on exhibition in the Champs Élysées. By a strange coincidence one of their Paris managers had been a French Foreign Office official in Syria when I was serving in that country. For myself, I found an unsolicited publicity agent in the correspondent of the *New York Herald*, a young American girl, whose subsequent account of my adventures made interesting, if quite surprising, reading.

With the cars reloaded, and Paris left behind, we reached Calais by way of 'the Battlefields', to find its hotels crowded owing to an International Athletic Gathering to which Prince George had paid a visit that day. The following day, the 29th of May, we crossed to Dover, and the same evening drew up at the door of our house in Chelsea in the cars which, since leaving Peking on the previous 12th of June had actually covered fifteen thousand two hundred miles of 'road'.

Like us, they would do it again.

* * *

But the Preacher of three thousand years ago, coming to the end of the Book, reiterated his old refrain: 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity'; and still we give him back his words: 'The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear'—we hope—'filled with hearing'.

*CHAOS rampant on Kublai's walls:
Yet another master ere twilight falls.*

★

*A grave on far-flung Lao-shan—
'Tis an English maid that mourns her man.*

★

*Summer night, where an island Peak
Sees a myriad lights flashed up from the creek.*

★

*Lands emerging from flooded bed—
Is it betel or blood that has stained them Red?*

★

*Tended tomb of a long-dead king—
Is his soul still vexed for the lack of a thing?*

★

*Forgotten Cham, you had your little hour,
A thousand years of mastery—to-day, a tumbled Tower.*

★

*Son of the arrow, Moi wild,
Will they let you abide an unspoiled child?*

★

*Half-breed child-city, ill to guide,
Sired by the West of an Eastern bride.*

★

*Gods of Angkor, are you fain to sleep
Buried in nature's tangled keep?*

★

*White, white sand, an azure lagoon,
Green grass—and coolth in a tropic noon.*

★

*Jewelled shrine of a Jasper god,
Cold as thy thousands 'neath the sod.*

*Might, in the dust of its last abode—
But ever the ceaseless life of the Road.*

★

*Traders, trekking through mountain vales,
Have ye aught of worth in your far-borne bales?*

★

*Mirrored snow-peaks and leafy gold,
Where Mogul leisured and loved of old.*

★

*Rock-hewn gate to the wealth of Ind—
Is it whisper of war borne in on the wind?*

★

*Frontier tribesman, rude and wild
As the barren lands that claim you child.*

★

*Sands that echo with eerie tones,
Is it dirge, as ye swirl over dead men's bones?*

★

*See you the mist-wrapped shrine, and sheen
Of sentinel spire mid snow-girt green?*

★

*Age upon age has gazed, and read
The cliff-cut record of mighty dead.*

★

*City on city to destruction hurled
Where rocked the green-fringed cradle of the world.*

★

*Whispered word in a dark bazaar—
But it reaches the desert wastes afar.*

★

*Castle and plain, where Faith drenched the sod
With Infidel blood—to the glory of God!*

*A waning Crescent that yet may rise
And wax to brilliance in Eastern skies.*

★

*Rude men but brave their courage to keep
When long-loved homes are a ruined heap.*

★

*Island city that still can laugh
Though war-wind scattered your sons as chaff.*

★

*Wander the world; but, far as ye roam,
Can ye find the peace of the lanes of home?*

J. DRUMMOND C. MONFRIES.

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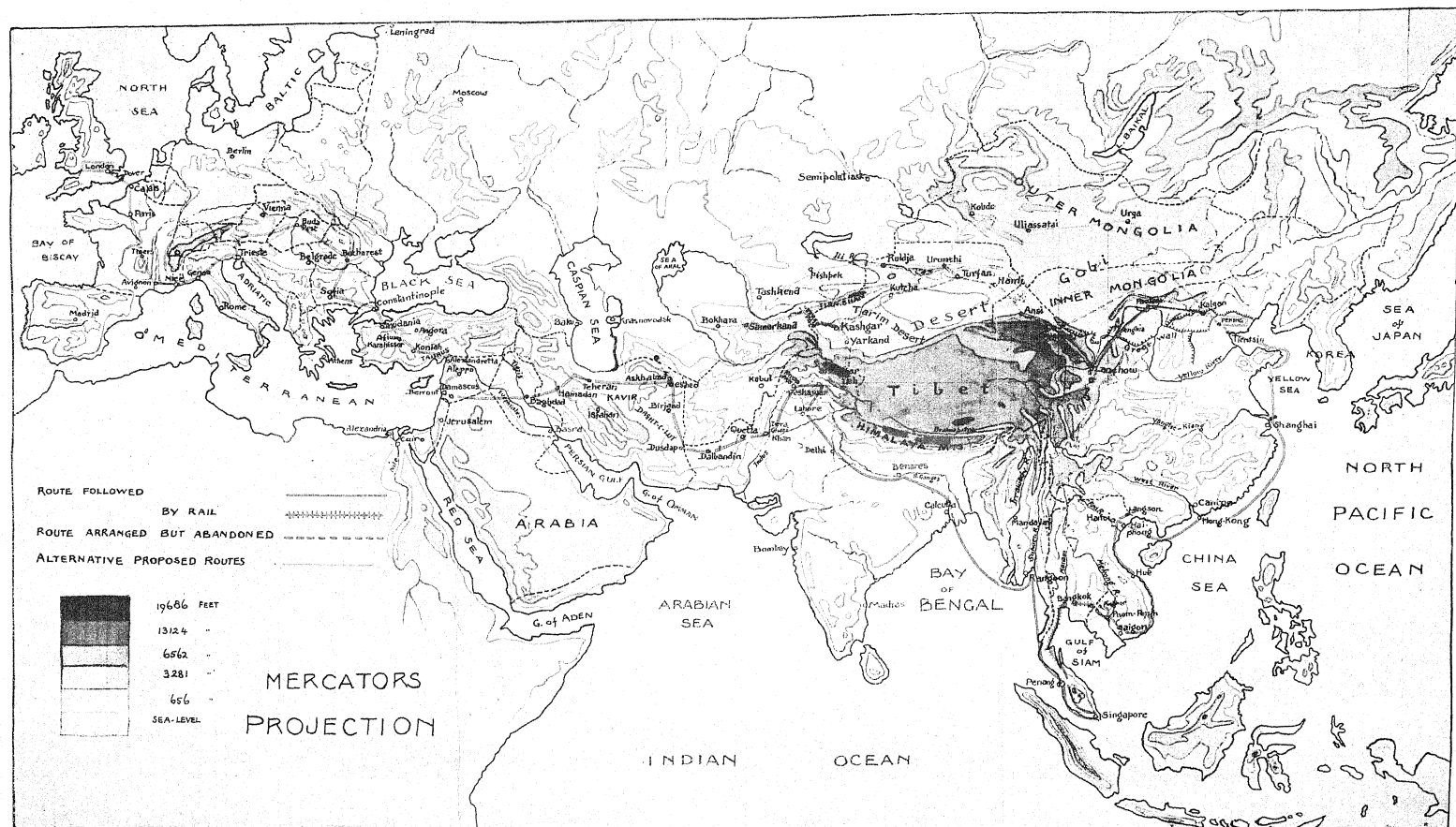
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IV.—'China to Chelsea.' Map showing route followed and various alternatives as planned.

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